



Mood Health Plan

10 SCIENCE-BASED TIPS FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Depression and anxiety have multiple causes. In many cases, medical treatment may be necessary. However, several diet and lifestyle changes have been scientifically proven to improve symptoms. Here are 10 science-based tips for improving depression and anxiety.

Feeling sad or hopeless occasionally is a part of life. But if you have depression, these feelings can linger.

Stopping your mind from racing so you can get to sleep becomes nearly impossible. As if insomnia isn't bad enough, the fatigue from not sleeping is sure to be there tomorrow.

Decision-making becomes hard. Feelings of emptiness linger. Eating sugary stuff to make you feel better...for a while. If you're there, you get it.

It creeps into all aspects of your life and makes life really hard to bear.

If you think you suffer from depression or anxiety, you need to talk to a doctor. In some cases, taking prescription anti-depressants or other medications may be needed. Going to counseling or therapy may be needed too. (There are no side effects!) Cognitive behavioral therapy is another option.

Treatment Resistant Depression

Even if you are already taking an anti-depressant, what you're taking may not be the right medication or dosage for you. **Only about half of all people notice a full remission of depression symptoms with the first medication prescribed to them.** There may need to be some trial and error before you and your doctor settle on the right drug and dosage.

Even if you are already taking an anti-depressant, what you're taking may not be the right medication or dosage for you.



About **1 in 5** people taking anti-depressants do not notice an improvement, regardless of the medication or dosage. As with most illnesses, **genetics play a part**. This doesn't mean you are destined for misery. Diet and lifestyle play a large part in turning on these depression genes. More on that later. Talk to your doctor about a company called **GeneSight**. They use your genetics to figure out which medication is most likely to work for you. Even with DNA testing, the best possible cocktail of prescription anti-depressants may not work for you.

If you have **treatment-resistant depression** or anxiety, we hope this article gives you some perspective and guidance on what to do next. If you are taking prescription medication to successfully manage your mood, do not consider the underlying problem solved.



Depression is not serotonin deficiency

Think of it this way: Tylenol can fix your headache. But your headache wasn't caused by Tylenol deficiency.

Serotonin, the feel-good chemical, is similar. **Depression is not caused by a serotonin deficiency**. Taking medications that maintain higher serotonin levels thankfully allow a lot of us to resume leading productive lives again.

But the root cause of the depression hasn't been solved.

Anti-depressant drugs are bandages. Often effective, but bandages regardless. They hide the symptoms without having healed anything. Taking a Xanax turns off the fire alarm. But the fire's still there.

Tricking your parasympathetic nervous system into temporarily relaxing by **Pranayama left-nostril breathing** works too. But the root cause is still present. The underlying problems still lurk.

This is not a rant against Big Pharma. It is also not meant to bash anti-depressants. They work...for some.

Taking a Xanax turns off the fire alarm. But the fire's still there.

They help many of us get back on our feet and put a smile on our faces.

A big issue with anti-depressants is something that doesn't get talked about – the [difficulty getting off these meds](#). For some, it is impossible. And others claim it is harder than heroin to quit. These medications can rewire our brains. And even the drug manufacturers do not know exactly how and why they work.

So...what should you do?

Even if you are taking anti-depressant, there are several dietary and lifestyle tweaks that can help you gain greater control over your mood and mental health.

If you want to shake this problem for good, you have to make diet and lifestyle changes along with the medical help discussed above.

It's the only long-term mood health plan.

Your Mood Health Plan

What we eat has an enormous effect on our bodies and minds. But you already knew that. What we hope to share here are specific dietary and lifestyle changes.

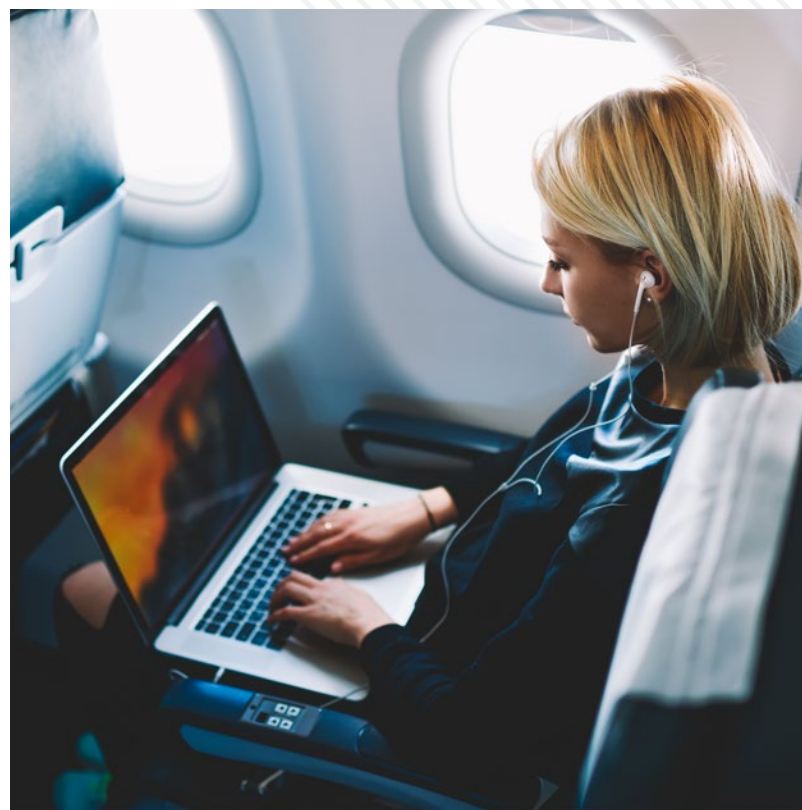
Any time you hear the word 'change,' especially with diet, it can be a challenge. We get it. But it's worth a try. And as time goes by, these changes will get easier and easier.

Steps 2, 3, 5, and 10 are the easiest because they require almost no effort. Start with those first. After a month or two, you may feel a lot better. Use that momentum to make the changes that require a little more effort.

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In other words, they are lifestyle diseases.

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A disconnect between our genes and our lifestyles

Hear us out before you get mad: chronic diseases like blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterol are diseases of choice.

Except we didn't have a choice. We didn't choose to be sick.

The choices were made for us by the world we live in.

As mentioned above, there is a genetic component to all this. Of course, there is! But when it comes to chronic disease, diet and lifestyle usually trumps genetics. Poor diet and lifestyle choice can switch on dormant depression genes - this is called **epigenetics**.

Lifestyle diseases happen because there is a huge gap between what our bodies were built for versus our modern lives. Like it or not, we – humans – are hunter gatherers. Have been for millennia and just because we have electricity, iPhones, and airplanes does not mean our genetics have adapted to modern times.

At our primal core, we are **still** meant to spend our days walking, climbing, digging, and running. We plucked berries. We dug up tubers. We climbed trees to steal eggs. We fished. And, yes, we occasionally hunted animals. All while walking miles and miles under the sun, socializing with our fellow gatherers. Oh, we occasionally went a day or two without food.

That's our genetic make-up. That's what our bodies were meant to do.

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Some groups do not suffer from depression. Why?

The few remaining hunter gatherer tribes in remote corners of the world do not have these chronic diseases, including depression or anxiety.

Unlike these tribes, our lives have changed. But our genetic blueprint has not. This costly disconnect between our hunter-gatherer origins and our commute-to-work-in-a-cubicle-then-come-home-to-watch-TV-lives is mostly to blame.

So...should you buy a bow and arrow and go sleep in a cave to cure your depression?

Ha! No.

Most of us with these chronic diseases do not realize that lifestyle plays such a big part in the development of these disease. We also do not realize that the corrective steps given to us such as 'excess salt causes high blood pressure,' or 'high fat diet causes high blood cholesterol' are partial truths. This type of conventional knowledge simply does not capture the whole picture.

If the causes of disease were that simple, lowering salt alone should fix blood pressure. But it doesn't. And a strict low-fat diet should reduce cholesterol. It doesn't. Depression and anxiety are no different.

*Our lives have changed,
but our genetic blueprint
has not.*

You need a multi-pronged approach to right your mood

No one single nutrient, drug, or food, supplement, or exercise can truly cure depression. Anti-depressant meds certainly help a lot of people get back on their feet and function. There's no denying that. But does it fix the root cause?

There is no magic pill. But there are many, many small steps (sometimes literally) that you can take to feel better.

We've been taught that depression is solely a chemical imbalance in the brain. And there may be some truth to that.

But what if there was more to it?

There is a growing number of scientists who feel that inflammation and the stimulation of your immune system caused by the [inflammation](#) may be at the [root cause of depression](#). Chemicals called cytokines are produced during inflammation.

Giving cytokines to happy people makes them quickly depressed. Take it away...and happy again. [Celexa, Prozac, Zoloft, and Paxil, all reduce production of cytokines.](#)

The compelling argument is that reduction of inflammatory cytokines is the reason behind why Prozac or Zoloft seems to work.

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Inflammation is your body's flashing red light. It's time to sit up and listen. We're not talking about the swollen, red, throbbing kind from an injury or bug bite. We're talking about the silent, low-grade, chronic kind that you can't see.

Inflammation can wreak havoc on your neurotransmitters (your happy chemicals), your [melatonin](#) (your nighty night hormone) and your cortisol (your wakey wakey hormone.)

When inflammation runs roughshod over these hormones, it's easy to see why you might feel depressed.

Measurable markers of inflammation are high in people with depression. And as depression fades, so do the levels of these inflammation markers.

But where is the inflammation coming from?

And what do you do about it?

A science-based approach that can work for everyone


The following guidelines are adapted from two very thorough and recent BioMed Central medical journals. Both are open access (free), so you don't have to pay to read the details...or keep us honest.

- [BMC Medicine](#)
- [BMC Psychiatry](#)





Here is a list of 10 dietary and lifestyle changes to consider:

 Diet


 Dental Health. Wait, what?! Yes. Keep reading.

 Sleep


 Stress and Trauma

 Sun/Vitamin D

 Gut Health

 Exercise

 Social Support and Community

 Smoking

 Nature

Each and every one of the lifestyle factors above can strongly influence your cytokine levels, which are markers of inflammation and which in turn can affect how you feel.

Unfortunately, there are no pills that do ANY of these things.

Even though there are pills for sleep and Vitamin D, they are inadequate. Sleep meds don't give you the right kind of sleep. And Vitamin D supplements don't reduce inflammation like direct sun exposure.

We really wish there were pills for all these things, but there aren't. We make pills for a living and when even we say there are no pills, there might be some truth to it.

Any pills we sell are simply for correcting deficiencies or for supporting gut health, as a part of this plan. There are no pills in this world for undoing the damage from eating fries, sipping coke, and binging on Netflix until 1 AM.

Sigh. It'd be really cool if there was tho...

Regardless, if you're ready to pull yourself up by the bootstraps, here is a more detailed explanation of the Whats and Whys of this Mood Health Plan.

There are no pills in this world for undoing the damage from eating fries, sipping coke, and binging on Netflix until 1 AM.





1. Adopt an Anti-Inflammatory Diet

There are several books about this on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) if you want to read more. We'll summarize what all of them say in a few paragraphs.

Changing diets when depressed is difficult. This is because certain foods become a way to cope with daily life. These are often the foods that ultimately worsen depression. Still, knowing what to change will help you take small steps to feeling better.



- **EAT REAL FOODS.** Eat stuff that was alive last week. Eat stuff that is sold along the perimeter of your grocery store. The middle aisles are often full of processed junk.
- **AVOID PROCESSED FOODS.** Avoid all sodas and juices. Avoid sugar and sweets in all their forms. Avoid refined grains and flour. There is nothing in grains that you can't get from vegetables. All of these increase your blood glucose which feeds inflammation.
- **AVOID SO-CALLED 'HEALTHY' VEGETABLE SEED OILS** made from corn, soy and other seeds. Just because it is made from plants doesn't make it healthy. Seed oils contain a lot of Omega-6 fats that can counteract healthy [Omega-3](#) and also feed inflammation. Cook with olive oil or grass-fed butter.

Even if you are already taking an anti-depressant, what you're taking may not be the right medication or dosage for you.

- **EAT A VERY WIDE VARIETY OF VEGETABLES.** Aim for 25 to 30 different types of vegetables per week. Most of our friends laugh and say they can barely name a dozen. We get it. But this is important because different fibers in different vegetables feed different gut bacteria in different sections of the gut. And each of those [bacteria may communicate their own unique signals to the brain](#).
- **EAT MORE FERMENTED FOODS** to nourish your gut bacteria colonies.

- **DRINK BONE BROTH.** This might seem like a random diet advice, but it's about one specific amino acid, glycine. If you don't like bone broth, find a way to get more collagen for its [sleep and mood promoting glycine](#).
- **EAT MORE SEAFOOD** because they contain Omega-3 and are a good source of iodine and selenium. Mood issues are often [caused by poor thyroid hormone levels](#)...and your body needs iodine and selenium to make thyroid hormones. Work with an [Integrative or Functional Medicine MD](#) to address root cause thyroid problems, if any. Oysters and crabs are the best sources for zinc, another nutrient strongly connected to mood. Vegans tend to be short on zinc, unless you're a meal-planning whiz.
- **AVOID ALCOHOL.** Makes you feel good for 2 hours. And like crap for 4 hours after that. You might think it helps you sleep better, but the truth is the [opposite](#).
- **AVOID EATING OUT AT RESTAURANTS** because they use seed oils or trans fats to cook. If you cannot go cold turkey on your favorite restaurant, try to cook at home during the week and go out on weekends.

Focus on foods and not calories.

And finally, focus on foods and not calories.

We've made these changes in our personal lives and the results have been amazing - better weight, better skin, better mood. About a month or two into this change, we all bumped into a hurdle: the shopping and cooking involved to make these changes became overwhelming. If you get there too, it's normal. Here's the trick: [meal prepping](#). You'll save time and money. It's a life saver.



2. Dental Health

Yes, seems odd that flossing might be connected to your mood.

But [dental health is strongly correlated to mood health](#).

No one is saying that one causes the other, but gum disease is an inflammatory condition.

One thing is clear: depression and dental health are connected.



Accumulation of plaque causes minor lesions in the gums. This leads to inflammation. Cytokine molecules are produced and that leads to system-wide trouble.

Avoiding sugar is key. Treat your teeth like bones, with a diet rich in [magnesium](#), [Vitamin K2](#), D3, and A.

Brushing and flossing twice a day is critical. OK, fine...once a day...but you have to promise to go to the dentist twice as often. Deal?



3. Sleep

Oh sleep. For people with depression, it can be as rare as a unicorn.

Insomnia, depression, and gut issues – they just seem to [go hand in hand](#).

It's a chicken and egg situation. Depression causes sleep issues. And insomnia can cause depression.

So, telling someone with depression to sleep 8 to 9 hours is, well, kinda cruel. Because we can't! Even if we want to!

Anyway, we're talking sleep without the aid of Ambien or Melatonin. Definitely not Zzzquil or any antihistamine 'sleep aids' with Diphenhydramine.

Natural, pill-free sleep is a strong anti-inflammatory. The more you reduce your inflammation with the aid of sleep, the less inflammation you have to fuel depression. Hence, chicken and egg.

There are a couple of relatively new and powerful lifestyle tips that you don't hear often. We're not talking about avoiding coffee and alcohol in the evenings, consistent bed times, or taking Epsom salt baths or having a soothing night time ritual...all of which help.

We're talking about circadian rhythm or your internal clock. Your body and every organ and cell in it has

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an internal clock. Two things keep it in balance or throw it off balance: light and food. In that order. And activity and temperature to a lesser extent.

LIGHT CONTROL

Your body needs bright light during the early part of the day.

Aim for half hour of sun exposure early in the day. And you need darkness after sunset. Darkness or absence of blue light after dark may be even more important than sunlight during the day.

Things like cell phone and tablet screens emit blue light, which tells your body that it is day time. Large screen TVs (think late night Netflix binge) is really awful on your internal clock. Blue light from these devices wreck your melatonin (nighty night hormone) for several hours.

Wake up in the middle of the night? DO NOT look at your phone, even to check the time. Even that brief blue light exposure can stop your melatonin production cold.

If Netflix feels like one of the few joyful escapes left, we don't want to take it away. Either install a blue-blocking app like f.lux on your device or put on wrap-around blue blocking glasses made by companies like uvex. You might look like Bono from U2 with yellow glasses, but, hey, there are worse things that could happen.

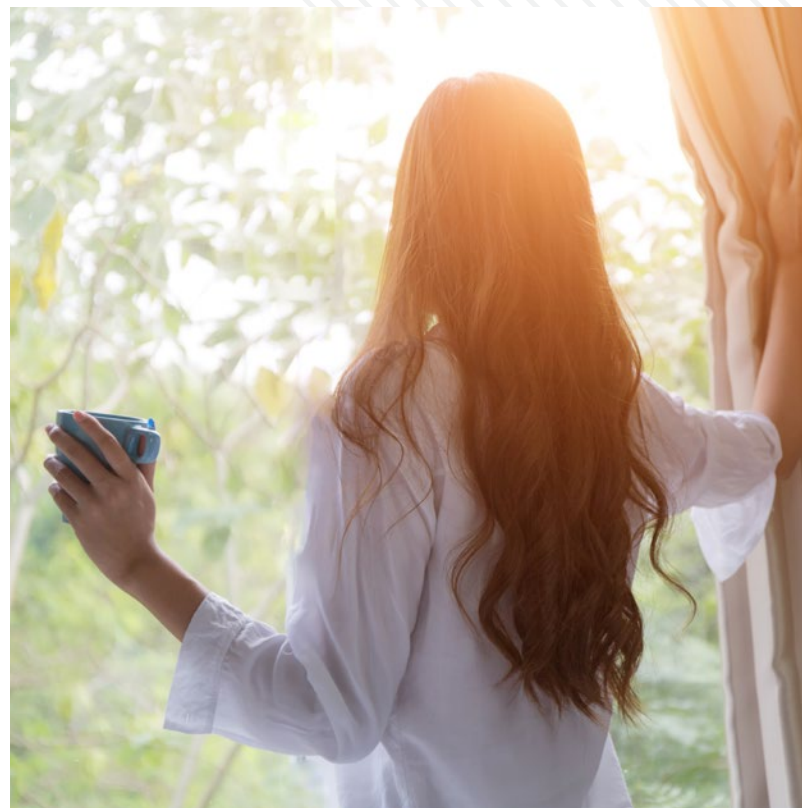
This knowledge is catching on. Apple products now have a Night Shift mode under Settings > Display & Brightness. Turn it to full warm mode between sunset and sunrise.

Blackout curtains in your bedroom can help if there are street lights entering through your windows. Or consider a sleep mask. These tricks are sometimes called [dark therapy](#).

Wearing shades during the day and viewing screens after sunset is very confusing to your body and harmful to sleep. Bright sunlight hitting your eyes and skin triggers [production calm-inducing serotonin](#).

So, leave the shades at home. You can look cool later.

Your body needs bright light during the early part of the day.



FOOD CONTROL

This is not about *what* you eat, but *when*.

The promising concept of [Intermittent Fasting](#) is related to this. Our bodies are designed to eat during the day. If you eat late at night, be it a snack or a big meal after sunset, you're, again, telling your body to rise and shine. A whole bunch of hormones come into play when you eat after dark. And they tell your body not to sleep.

Ideally, eat during sunlight hours. Finish all your meals and snacking at least 3 hours before bed. If you're getting hungry just before bed, then you're eating the wrong things – try a little less carbs and a little more protein and healthy fats with your dinner. Fats and proteins are less likely to cause Chinese food syndrome, where you are starving 3 hours after dinner because you ate a mountain of rice.

Movement during warm daylight hours also helps tell your body when it's day and that'll help your body fall asleep when it's night. How much movement? We'll get to that in a bit, but walk a lot if you can... during early hours of the day and wind down after sunset.

Remember we talked about our hunter-gatherer genes and how we are disconnected from those genes by modern life? Eating and moving during daylight hours and avoiding bright light (especially blue light) after sunset underscore the disconnect with our genes.



4. Stress and trauma

Trauma is a tough one. Trauma, emotional or physical, from youth can rear its head later in life.

Unlike insomnia or poor diet, trauma is unique to each of us. And all of us carry some degree of it. The deeper the wound, the more likely it is to haunt us.

You owe it to yourself to get as healed as possible. Sometimes the pain is simply too deep and total healing may be impossible. Still, with multiple forms of therapy from psychotherapy (counseling), music therapy, to pet therapy, there are many options open to us. Doing this may be the kindest thing you could do for yourself.

Stress is a beast of a different stripe.



Stress is a beast of a different stripe.

Be it a difficult commute, a horrible boss, a mountain of bills, a struggling marriage, death of a loved one, or even a kitchen renovation, stress has been shown to increase markers of inflammation in the blood.

Stress researchers classify it into 4 factors – NUTS:

- **N**ovelty
- **U**npredictability
- **T**hreat
- **S**ense of no control.

There are many ways to address stress – and again, working with a professional is important if you cannot get your arms around it. But options include any or all – yoga, meditation, breathing exercises, mindfulness based cognitive therapy, pet therapy, socializing with friends.

We get it if some of these things seem out of reach. That's just what depression does. Getting off the couch to hang out with friends or go to a yoga class is just not that easy when you're depressed.



5. Sunlight and Vitamin D

This is the one factor that might feel like it's easy to fix with a pill. But it's not that simple.

Turns out that a Vitamin D pill is not the same as getting some sun.

It's true that Vitamin D deficiency is common. It's true that there are several links that connect [Vitamin D deficiency to depression](#).

In studies, supplementing with Vitamin D quickly reduces two cytokines most closely associated with depression. Yet the science is not as conclusive as we'd like. The science seems mixed.



Safe and controlled sunlight exposure may offer benefits that Vitamin D3 pills alone may not. Sunlight appears to regulate immunity and inflammation in ways that Vitamin D3 pills do not.

There are light receptors on your skin that also help control your circadian rhythm, which will help you sleep, and in turn your mood.

If you're deficient in Vitamin D, your doctor may still have you take some pills, but know that there are benefits to controlled sunlight exposure that you can't get with just pills.



6. Gut Health

A lot's been written about this since probiotics came onto the scene. But this isn't about probiotics.

This is about two things:

1. **Eating foods that help improve your gut health**
2. **Avoiding foods that destroy gut health**

But first, why is gut health important to your mood?

If you've ever felt your stomach do a little dance before having to get up in front of a group of people and talking, you've experienced what scientists call the 'gut-brain axis.'

In other words, what's going on in your brain affects your gut, and vice versa. There's constant cross-talk between your gut and your brain. This, without a doubt, affects how you feel.

There's something else going on in the gut that we've recently begun to understand. There are 'good guy' and 'bad guy' bacteria in the gut. That's normal.

What's not normal is when we eat a low-fiber diet, the thick layer of probiotic bacteria that coats the inside of our intestines and colon slowly disappears. This thick layer of probiotic bacteria help keep poop where it belongs...but it also keeps poop's posse of bad bacteria where they belong.

Low-fiber/veggie diet, stress, sugar, alcohol, gluten, pain meds, nutrient deficiencies degrade the gut lining and create small gaps in it, causing a gut permeability problem.

Low-fiber/veggie diet, stress, sugar, alcohol, gluten, pain meds, nutrient deficiencies (sound familiar?) degrade the gut lining and create small gaps in it, causing a gut permeability problem. This allows bits and pieces of bad bacteria (called gram negatives by scientists) from poop to cross into the blood stream.

Some of the so-called ‘bad’ bacteria may have a [job and real reason to be in the colon](#). But when bits and pieces of them end up in the bloodstream, things go south fast.

[Public speaking](#) nervousness can cause gut permeability in some people – an extreme form of which is, well, diarrhea. One of our neighbors woke up in the middle of the night to some strange sounds coming from the balcony and realized he was being burglarized. Thinking quickly, he yelled ‘Get the gun!’, to his wife at the top of his voice, hoping the burglar would hear it too. (Never mind that the wife responded with ‘What gun?! We don’t have any guns!’) The burglar was never caught, but left behind evidence that he’d had an extreme episode of gut permeability right there on the balcony.

Anyway, as soon as gram negative bacteria particles enter the blood stream due to leaky gut, our immune system goes into full-on freak out and attack mode. **This is often called leaky gut and it’s at the core of a lot of misery.** Why? Because when the immune system is in overdrive, inflammation goes through the roof.

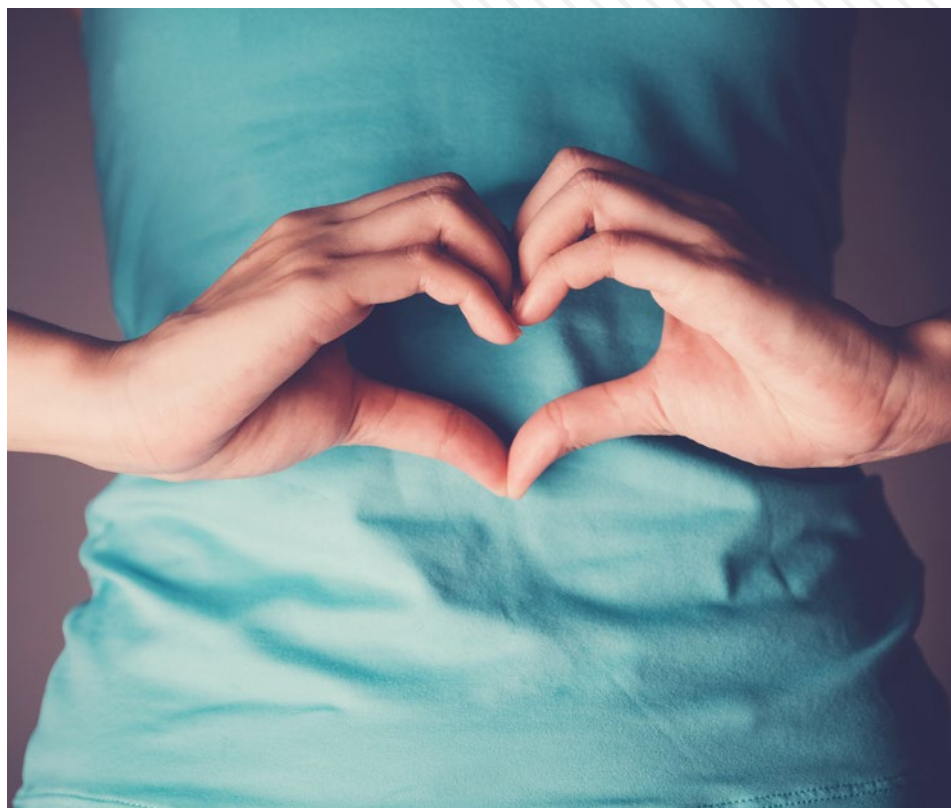
Possible symptoms of leaky gut are:

- food sensitivities
- bloating
- digestive issues
- fatigue
- even minor-but persistent skin problems.

Leaky gut is considered a [‘new potential pathway to depression.’](#)

Old school doctors may roll their eyes and dismiss it because it is not part of medical training. One thing old school docs can’t deny is the role of gut permeability in chronic diseases like depression and anxiety. Possibly because there are no pills to prescribe for leaky gut. Your only options are diet and lifestyle changes.

Exercise has the ability to alleviate and reduce the severity of depression. There is no doubt or uncertainty with that science.



Having said all that, there's only [emerging proof](#) that leaky gut directly causes depression. But we do have proof that leaky gut causes inflammation...and inflammation is a sure thing if you have depression.

HOW TO FIX LEAKY GUT AND IMPROVE GUT HEALTH

1. **EAT A WIDE VARIETY OF FIBER RICH VEGETABLES.** 25-30

different vegetables per week is the goal. Why? Different fibers feed different bacteria in different sections of the gut and this will give you that thick layer of probiotic lining that your gut needs. You can't get a wide variety of fibers from lettuce, tomatoes, and peas. A thriving gut microbiome fed a wide variety of ['prebiotic'](#) fibers can not only reduce inflammation, but also [produce 'happy' neurotransmitters](#) like serotonin and GABA.

*25-30 different
vegetables per week
is the goal*

2. **AVOID SUGAR IN ALL ITS FORMS.**

3. **AVOID ALCOHOL.**

4. **DO SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR STRESS LEVEL.** See above. Stress can significantly worsen gut permeability issues. One probiotic bacteria (it's not available as a supplement yet), *Lactobacillus farciminis*, has shown some promise in reducing stress-induced leaky gut.

5. **TALK TO A NUTRITIONIST** about addressing nutritional deficiencies. One of our nutritionists was diagnosed with depression and put on Paxil. After a year of no improvement, he was taken off the drug, but diagnosed with dangerously low Vitamin D levels. Instead of taking D3 supplements, he used safe and controlled sun exposure to correct his Vitamin D levels. He says he's now '80% better.'

6. **AVOID GLUTEN.** Yeah, yeah (eye roll). Bread and flour contain not just gluten, but other gut-degrading proteins like gliadin. Even if you are not allergic to gluten, it causes gut cells to release a compound called zonulin, which can single-handedly cause leaky gut. No one is immune to the effects of zonulin, even if you don't feel its effects. Let others argue about it. Let's get you feeling better. Toss the wheat.



7. **TALK TO AN ALLERGIST** who specializes in food sensitivities. A lot of people are surprised that they're reactive to dairy. You really won't know which foods to avoid until you've been thoroughly tested. Something like an [ImmunoCap IgE](#) blood test can be eye-opening.

As if depression wasn't bad enough, **people start noticing digestive issues about 3 years after the start of depression.** On average, that's how long it takes for people with depression to start having indigestion, constipation, and Irritable Bowel Disorders.

Fixing gut health issues before it gets this bad should be a priority. And it takes a lot less effort than the next tip...



7. Exercise

Ugh. Exercise. It's difficult to motivate healthy, happy people to get off their butts. But having to exercise while depressed is difficult. Motivation and energy are usually tapped out. Add insomnia to that and it is, well, really hard to do.

We get it.

HERE'S AN IDEA: maybe exercise comes after some of the low-effort changes in this plan, like, fixing the circadian cycle with light control and time restricted eating.

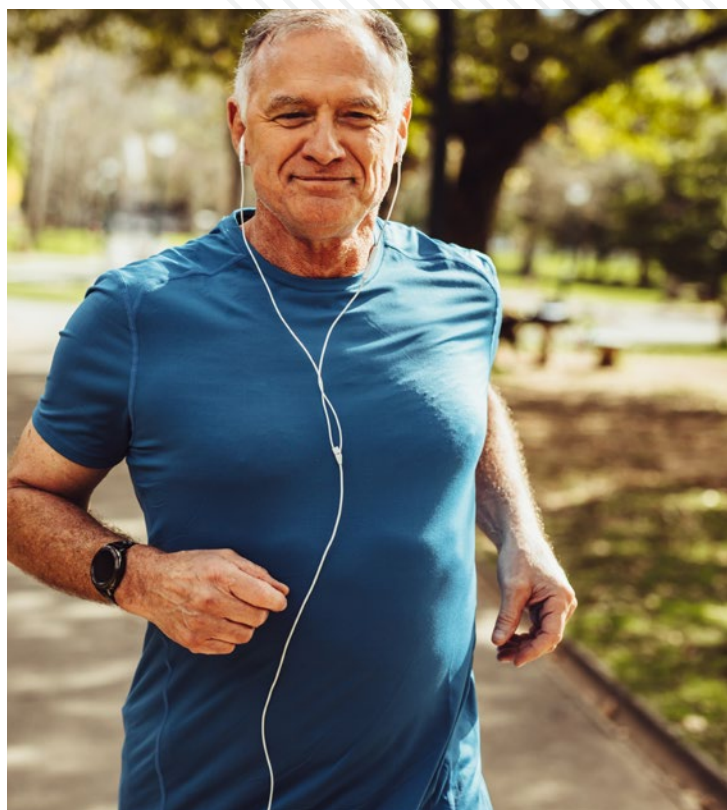
Physical activity may seem less impossible after other easier changes are part of your new lifestyle. Some people get hooked on the endorphin high – may not be such a bad reason to start moving.

Exercise has the ability to [alleviate](#) and [reduce](#) the severity of depression. There is no doubt or uncertainty with that science.

Turns out, it's not the endorphin rush that cures depression, but rather the recovery from exercise strongly reduces inflammation.

On the flip side, sedentary behavior is now considered a strong risk factor for not just heart disease, but [increased inflammation](#).

Exercise has the ability to alleviate and reduce the severity of depression. There is no doubt or uncertainty with that science.





8. Social support and Community

Yukking it up with a group of friends may seem like the last thing you want to do. After all, social withdrawal is a symptom of depression.

People with depression often want to go to parties and have fun. But our bodies and minds say 'no.' It's just too hard.

It's even harder for introverts.

We get it.

'Socializing' via social media somehow becomes easier and may be even preferable to many with depression. Again, we get it.

The downside with social media is that [it alone can feed depression](#).

But the thing is, there is very strong association between having face-to-face interactions, strong social support or network and emotional well-being. We've always lived in tribes or groups. Modern life makes it so easy to be alone. Many of us live far away from our 'tribe' and it's so easy to shut the door literally and figuratively to the outside world.

Supportive emotional relationships from friends, family, and loved ones can be very beneficial.

They serve our psychological needs.

On the flip side, toxic relationships that you can't easily walk away from have the [opposite effect](#). Actually, negative or toxic relationships are [more indicative](#) of future depression.

Married couples who have hostile, ugly fights are [more likely to have leaky gut and unbalanced gut bacteria](#). This fuels the fire that causes depression.

There is very strong association between having face-to-face interactions, strong social support or network and emotional well-being.





9. Smoking.

Yep. Smoking. Don't really need to say anything.



10. Nature

New [research](#) shows that spending two hours per week in nature has a very powerful effect on physical and psychological well being.

By 'nature,' we mean wilderness, parks, meadows, wooded areas, urban green spaces, rivers, lakes, or ocean.

Of all the suggested ideas in this plan, this may be the simplest and easiest.

It doesn't need you to eat veggies. Just be around veggies.

It doesn't need you to jog around the park, just sit and stare.

It doesn't need you to socialize, just listen to the breeze and the birds.

The key here is 120 minutes.

People who did this for less than 2 hours a week, did not notice benefits. We don't know why this works. It could be the stress reduction. It could be the unplugging from the rest of the world. It could be that nature is full of probiotics – who knows! What we do know is that it works.

If you decide to do this, be sure to leave the cell phone at home.

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How to put this plan into effect

If you're really struggling with enthusiasm and motivation, that's normal.

The word 'change,' especially with diet and exercise can be a challenge. We get it.

But it's worth a try. And as time goes by, these changes will get easier and easier.

That's why we suggest you start with the easiest changes.

Start with:



TIP 2:
Dental health



TIP 5:
Sunlight exposure



TIP 3:
Sleep discipline



TIP 10:
Nature exposure

Start with those first. After a month or two, you may feel a lot better. Use that momentum to make the changes that require a little more effort.

Let us know how you do

So, there you have it. These are the lifestyle and dietary factors that science says (and we here at InnovixLabs strongly believe) will improve your depression and anxiety.

Note that there are no magic pills, short cuts, or easy solutions.

We wish there was a magic pill. But there isn't. Now that might seem odd coming from a company that sells dietary supplements. We hear that often.

Start with the easy ones like nature exposure, circadian rhythm control using light and food, simple stress reduction steps, and then, work up to gut-friendly diets, socializing, and exercise.

And be sure to let us know how you do.



STUFF THAT MUST BE SAID:

InnovixLabs sells supplements. It goes without saying (but we'll say it anyway) that we do not make claims that taking our supplements will treat, cure, or prevent any disease, including depression or anxiety.

Why? Because your case of depression or anxiety may have nothing to do with nutrition or gut health. Your mood also depends on a whole bunch of factors: what and when you eat, how much you sleep, how often you move, people around you, sun exposure, your hormones, heck...even social media. Nutrition (and supplements) should be a PART of a larger plan. Should you decide to include supplements as a part of this larger plan, hey, call us. We can help.

This plan isn't meant to replace prescription meds or doctor visits. You may need prescription medications. Most of the supplements we sell may be taken with prescription anti-depressants. Do not make these decisions by yourself.

Talk to your doctor about it.

Supplements may help, but supplements alone will not restore you to complete health. We think supplements are a small piece of the health puzzle. You cannot outrun a bad diet and inactivity with pills. Most of the heavy lifting involved in restoring your health will have to come from you in the form of healthy eating and lifestyle corrections. In these articles, we are merely sharing our excitement about nutritional science and doing our best to translate dense science into easy-to-read English. We geek out on nutrition and health science and we think you will too. We hope it makes you a more informed consumer.