

Non medication ways to treat depression.

1. Consult your primary care physician to rule out medical problems such as anemia, hypothyroid, folate or Vitamin B 12 deficiency.
2. Keep a regular schedule, especially consistent sleep and wake times. It has been shown that focusing on bio-rhythms in this way is beneficial, especially in learning what helps a person feel better and what trigger signs or situations may make a person feel worse.
3. Focus getting good sleep. (see the sleep tips page under “resources” on denverpsychiatry.com).
4. Sunlight – We live in Colorado, get a lot of it and it certainly can’t hurt to be out in the sun; with sunscreen of course. It’s also very good for your bones as you make more Vitamin D, which helps your body use Calcium.
5. Light therapy if there is a winter time depression component has been shown to be effective in depression. The lights should be bought from a company that specifically makes lights for seasonal affective problems. Before using, you should discuss how to do it with your provider.
6. Engage in regular exercise; evidence shows that exercise can even prevent brain shrinkage, which has been shown to happen in depression. It also may enhance and help balance neuro-chemicals in the brain that balance mood. Research suggests that any kind of activity that increases heart rate is good for depression and should be at least 30 minutes three to five days per week.
7. Therapy has been shown to help with depression, especially Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Wikipedia has a good definition of this. You can also check out the website “moodgym”, which takes you through CBT.
8. B Vitamins, especially folic acid and B 12 can help modulate stress and depression. B-12 can be taken in vitamin form, and is also at high levels in meat, cheese and eggs. Folic acid is in citrus fruit, leafy greens and legumes.
9. SAMe (S-adenosyl-methionine). It is sold over the counter. It is an amino acid and is believed to be helpful in boosting dopamine and serotonin. It can be used in conjunction with a traditional medication or by itself. It should not be used in bipolar mood disorder unless a person is on a mood stabilizer. There is some empiric data that it is effective in treating depression.
10. 5-HTP – (5-hydroxytryptophan). This is a chemical that the body uses to make serotonin and is believed to help increase serotonin levels in the brain.
11. Omega -3 Fatty Acids – These are believed to help stabilize brain functioning and stabilize moods. They also are believed to help circulation and used for cardiac issues as well. They occur naturally in fish, walnuts, soybeans and tofu.
12. Other Fats – Diets should contain fats (in moderation) as they are important in many processes in the body. A diet with a high ratio of Omega 6 to Omega 3 fatty acids, however, has been linked to depression and anxiety. Corn oil and safflower oil are high in Omega 6 content. **These oils are commonly used in fried foods like fast foods** – and are also in meat, eggs and sunflower oil. American diets may contain a ration of up to 15:1 of Omega 6 to Omega 3 fatty acids and a much healthier ratio would be 5:1. Try to cut out fried and fast foods.

13. Anti-oxidants, from whole grains, fruits, vegetables or supplements, help general body function and potentially decrease inflammatory activity, also decrease risk for several kinds of cancer.
14. Practice relaxation techniques, including deep breathing. This is important because most people suffering from depression also suffer from some anxiety. Minimizing stress and the body's reaction to it will help in recovering from depression. Yoga is a great way to modulate or moderate anxiety. There is a link to relaxation techniques on my "sleep tips" page in the resource section of my website.
15. Hypnosis, biofeedback, and acupuncture have helped some people with depression.