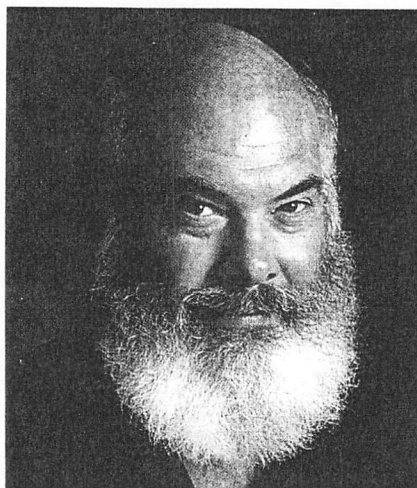


Depression Relief With The Amino Acid Tyrosine

Increasingly, people are turning to antidepressants such as prozac to control and manage their anxiety and depression. Valerian and St. John's Wort are two natural alternatives to antidepressant drugs. In Germany, St. John's Wort is the preferable choice for depression; over 50% of those using medication for depression in Germany take St. John's Wort, less than 10% use prozac. (ed. note.)

Tyrosine (actually L-tyrosine) is a precursor of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine and dopamine. Taking tyrosine on an empty stomach may cause an increase in norepinephrine and dopamine in the brain, which can lead to increased energy, alertness and improved moods, thus relieving depression. Unlike Saint-John's Wort, which can take two months to work, and prescription antidepressants, which probably won't kick in for about



six weeks, tyrosine works very quickly. However, it can raise blood pressure in some people, so therefore must be used cautiously by people with hypertension.

Another amino acid, phenylalanine, is likewise a precursor of norepinephrine and dopamine that can be used to treat depression (with the same caution about its effects on blood pressure). In the past I've recommended trying a mixture of D-phenylalanine and L-phenylalanine for depression in a combination, known as DLPA. The mixture is less likely to raise

blood pressure than the straight L-form and can be used as part of a broader regimen to treat depression. The first thing in the morning (about an hour before breakfast) take 1,500 milligrams of DLPA, 100 milligrams of vitamin B-6, 500 milligrams of vitamin C plus a piece of fruit or small glass of juice. Make sure you're not using any over-the-counter or prescription drugs that can contribute to depression. These include all antihistamines, tranquilizers, sleeping pills and narcotics. If DLPA doesn't help, try L-tyrosine in the same way.

On the whole, I suggest following a low-protein, higher carbohydrate diet to help break out of depression. Be especially careful about alcohol and any recreational drugs including cocaine, amphetamines, "downers," narcotics and marijuana. Although they may provide a temporary sense of relief, if used regularly, they're likely to increase depression to dangerous levels. Addiction to coffee and others forms of caffeine can also interfere with normal moods and make depression worse. Be sure to get regular, physical exercise — 45 minutes of aerobic activity most days — itself an antidepressant. ■

Herbs For Anxiety And Depression

SAINT-JOHN'S WORT

(*Hypericum perforatum*)

Leaves and flowers of the plant

Used for: Seasonal affective disorder

Mild to moderate depression, nervousness, insomnia, anorexia Skin irritation, including herpes simplex

Available in: Tablets, capsules, tinctures, fluid extract, powdered extract and oil.

Herb/drug interactions: Saint-John's Wort is probably an SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor) but unlike Prozac and Zoloft, it affects other neurotransmitters as well. Therefore it may have an additive effect with those drugs, possibly causing an uncomfortable serotonin syndrome. Do not simply add to an existing pharmaceutical regimen.

When buying: Look for products standardized for hyperforin primarily.

Warning: High intake may cause photosensitivity; take precautions with sun

exposure. Takes two months for antidepressant effect to be noticeable.

DOSAGES:

Adults: 300 milligrams three times a day.

For topical use on irritated skin, apply the oil directly several times a day.

Children under 10: Half the adult dosage.

Not to be combined with other mood drugs. Topical applications same as adult.

VALERIAN

(*Valeriana officinalis*)

The root of the valerian plant

Used for: • Insomnia; it's a safe sleeping aid

• Seizure disorders; it's a mild sedative • Anxiety

Available in: Tincture, extract, tablets

Herb/drug interactions: Valerian interacts with alcohol, some antihistamines, muscle relaxants, psychotropic drugs and narcotics. When taking any of these

drugs, you should use valerian only under the supervision of a health care provider.

When buying: Look for valerian products standardized to 1% valerenic acid.

Warning: Valerian is relatively safe and no significant side effects are known, but people with impaired kidney or liver functions should not take valerian except under a physician's supervision.

DOSAGES

Adults: Use 1 teaspoon of the tincture in a quarter cup of water, or 1 or 2 tablets, at bedtime.

Children under 10: One dropperful at bedtime in a quarter cup of water. ■

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