

# Can Naturopathic Medicine Help with Depression?

Do you feel sad and uninterested in life? Are you sluggish and tired all the time? Don't feel like talking to anyone or doing any of the things you used to enjoy?

These symptoms have all been associated with depression and other mental health issues. Sometimes they stem from situations in life, and sometimes they stem from undiagnosed and untreated physical conditions.

## HORMONES AFFECT YOUR EMOTIONAL OUTLOOK

What, exactly, are hormones? Hormones are substances secreted by various glands such as the adrenal gland, the thyroid and the pancreas and dispatched to different destinations in the body. Hormones act as chemical "messengers" to signal different organs and tissues to perform specific functions.

Fatigue is one symptom of depression. Fatigue can be caused by adrenal dysfunction. Adrenal exhaustion prevents a sufficient production of cortisol, and that can lead to tiredness, sluggishness, and low mood.

Testosterone is the key male sex hormone that regulates fertility and sex drive. It also increases bone density and signals bone marrow to make red blood cells as well as performing other physiological functions. Low testosterone levels in men can cause an inability to focus, irritability, and depression. Low testosterone levels are not limited to older men; young men can suffer from that too.

Women also need a certain amount of testosterone. It is produced in small amounts in a woman's ovaries. Combined with estrogen, the female sex hormone, testosterone in a woman helps with the growth,

maintenance and repair of the bone mass and the reproductive tissues. Low testosterone levels in a woman can lead to a lack of muscle tissue, decreased sex drive, and depression. "Women's hormones" such as estrogen and progesterone can also have a profound influence on emotional wellbeing.

Low thyroid function can cause low energy, weight gain, hair loss and, yes, symptoms of depression including exhaustion and lethargy. Excessive thyroid hormones can cause insomnia, fatigue, irritability, and a number of other physical and emotional symptoms.

Hormones do not act in isolation; they coordinate their actions much as the musicians in a symphony play the different instruments in an orchestrated fashion to create a harmonious whole. Imagine how the music would sound if there were too many kettle drums, not enough reed instruments, and half of the strings on the violins were broken. It's the same with hormones -- if there is too little or too much of one hormone, it can throw the other hormones out of harmony.

## NUTRITIONAL DEFICIENCIES

Did you know that low iron can cause symptoms that look like depression? When your iron is depleted, you don't get enough oxygen to the brain and your brain feels like it's in a constant state of starvation. What happens then? Most often, any mild exertion leaves you winded, and all you want to do is lie down on the couch.

Your body absorbs the nutrients in the food you eat through the process of digestion. The friendly bacteria that reside in the digestive system break down food molecules into useable fuel for the body. These bacteria also produce vitamins and they help protect the body from disease. Additionally, they

affect the body's production of neurotransmitters such as serotonin, dopamine and epinephrine. If you have an insufficient amount of friendly digestive bacteria or if you have a history of digestive issues such as irritable bowel syndrome, Crohn's disease or colitis, your body's ability to absorb nutrition and to generate neurotransmitters is impaired. This can result in symptoms associated with depression.

*There are such things as bad life situations that can be stressful and difficult to deal with. They can be exhausting and dispiriting and should not be discounted. But symptoms of depression could also be related to physical factors that will surrender to gentle, natural treatment.*

**Call (780) 485-9468 for a consultation with one of our experienced and understanding doctors.**

