

Beating the Winter Blues

WORDS BY Catherine Garney

During the winter months, it is common to experience the winter blues as temperatures drop, daylight hours are shorter, and we spend less time outdoors. If you are feeling more anxious, stressed or depressed over the winter, then you may have low levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin that helps you feel happy, calm and positive.

Approximately 90% of serotonin is produced in the gut and is highly dependent on beneficial gut bacteria so taking a probiotic supplement and eating probiotic foods such as sauerkraut, kimchi, kefir and probiotic yoghurt can be helpful.

Do you have afternoon cravings for sugar and carbohydrates?

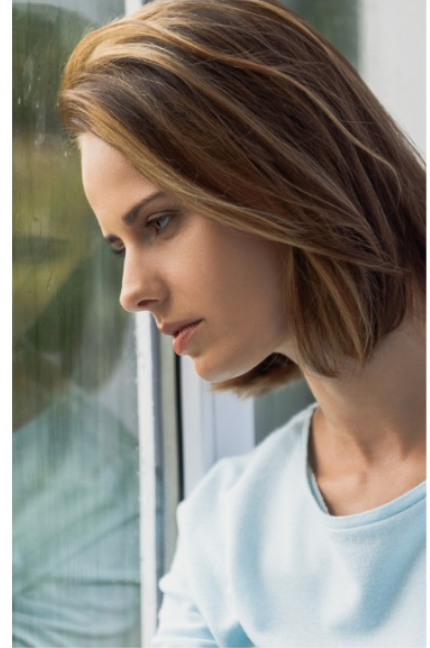
Afternoon sugar cravings could be to do with low serotonin as when levels in the brain drop, we develop a craving for sugar and carbohydrate rich foods. Eating foods rich in tryptophan at breakfast and lunch (an amino acid that is a precursor to serotonin) may help to boost serotonin levels in the afternoon and help with those sugar cravings. Foods rich in tryptophan are oily fish such as salmon and tuna (omega 3 helps to support brain health and mood as well), eggs, cheese, milk, beef, pork, peanuts, spinach, oats and pumpkin seeds.

Magnesium

A deficiency of magnesium can also contribute to low serotonin levels and symptoms of low mood and worry. Eating your leafy greens daily and supplementing with magnesium can help you feel more calm, positive and relaxed and sleep better.

Vitamin D

Low levels of vitamin D are linked to depression. Our primary source of vitamin D is from sun exposure



on the skin as important food sources such as cod liver oil and liver are not common dietary staples. During the winter it can take as much as 1 hour sun exposure each day to get adequate vitamin D. Taking vitamin D as a supplement can help to boost your levels over the cooler months, as well as supporting your immune system.

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Mastering Winter Wellness: Thrive Through the Cold Season with Expert Tips and Immunity-Boosting Strategies

'Good science is good observation'

Avatar, James Cameron, 2009.

What do I recommend to support you staying well all winter (as I have for the past 30 years?)

My strategy immediately strengthens your immune system, it helps to remove the body waste, it lowers stress on the body, it sets up healthy rhythms and routines in which humans tend to thrive and it significantly heals and strengthens the body in general.

Give Up the Poisons

- Quit smoking
- Give up the alcohol
- Let go of the heavy stimulants like coffee and added sugar
- Avoid all caffeinated and cola/fizzy/soft/energy drinks
- Avoid all high-sugar/high-fat processed foods

A Healthy Routine

- Prioritize sleep - bank sleep before 10pm
- Get eight hours of good-quality sleep each night
- Early to bed, early to rise 9pm-5am or 10pm-6am ideally
- A basic daily routine around bed time, wake time, exercise time and meal times

Change Your Diet

- Eat a plant-based wholefood diet based around leafy green vegetables
- Eat good varied healthy plant-based foods – lots of colour – lots of basic vegetables, a good selection of seasonal fruits
- Eat high fibre foods to clear and clean the bowels (nuts, seeds, wholegrains, legumes, fruits, vegetables)

Regular Intelligent Fasting

- Take the day off food once a week
- Build to longer fasts as you can
- Eat less overall

Move That Body

- Get daily movement in the morning; a good strong 40-60m walk, with music if that brings you joy
- Daily stretching, deep breathing, relaxing and meditation

Get Outdoors

- Walk in the sunshine every day for at least an hour when you can
- Get around the green – green calms and soothes us

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For more from Jason check out www.jasonshonbennett.com

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