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How to Prepare for Seasonal Affective Disorder

When the seasons change you have to be ready for a change in mood, especially as we move from fall into winter. Although it may not seem as drastic of a shift as you think, it matters more to our mental and physical states than you may know. Seasonal affective disorder is estimated to affect around 10 million Americans a year, and this isn't even the full number of reported cases.



As we begin to lose the summer sun and transition into the darker months of the year, depression and fatigue seem to make that transition with us. But, there are ways to shake off the impending gloom and brighten your day, if you follow some of these steps you can combat seasonal affective disorder and find yourself being just as happy as you are in the warm summer months.

Try light therapy. Doctors have called this idea phase shifting. Because we lose sunlight so quickly as we head into the winter, you should start setting out bright lights when beginning your day. By eating breakfast and starting your daily routine under bright indoor lights, you get used to not having sunlight and can better acclimate to your new surroundings.

Exercise. Exercise. Exercise. Regular exercise works wonder for depression in general, so why would it not work for SAD-induced depression? By maintaining regular exercise habits you can work to get rid of the fatigue, depression and tiredness by adding at least 60 minutes a day of activity into your life.

Maintain a heart-healthy diet and get plenty of sleep. These next two ideas go hand in hand, as both work together to not only combat SAD, but promote a healthy lifestyle. No brainers, right? Maybe. But, you would be surprised at the amount of people who do not follow both or one of these guidelines, I'm sure you know someone who fits into those categories. Make sure to maintain a regular sleep schedule while keeping up with a heart-healthy diet in order to fight seasonal affective disorder.

Last, but not least, try acupuncture! Acupuncture is a great solution to combating SAD. There are various points on the body that have been known to alleviate symptoms of SAD. A primary point that should be addressed when treating SAD is Yintang, and when being treated for SAD by an acupuncturist you should be seen between one to two times a week.

Try some of these techniques and you should have no problem battling and conquering the seasonal affective disorder that may be bothering you this winter.

Acupuncture and Seasonal Affective Disorder Symptoms: Depression

Acupuncture is known to be one of the cures to combat symptoms of seasonal affective disorder. SAD affects millions of Americans a year and can turn a once productive person to a tired and depressed individual. Although, SAD has various symptoms, probably the most common is depression. And, acupuncture has been shown to work great when treating symptoms of depression.

Recently, lots of research has been conducted comparing the benefits acupuncture has on individuals who categorize themselves as depressed. As depression is the main symptom of SAD we should look at how acupuncture affects depression directly when we decide if it is a viable treatment for SAD.

In a study published by The Cochrane Library, researchers found that acupuncture did have a positive effect on treating depression when it was paired with medication. Some of the trials conducted also showed that acupuncture alone was a significant form of treatment.

But, overall, researchers could not come to conclusive evidence as they reported bias in some of the trials conducted, the study stated that further evidence needed to be gathered in order to come to a firm conclusion as to how effectively acupuncture treatments benefit depression. Researchers recognize acupuncture does provide benefits to treating depression, but more work must be done to truly realize the full capacity of those benefits.

Touch of the East Acupuncture
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3 Simple Ways to Alleviate the Common Cold

The common cold is something that everybody deals with throughout the year. For some, it's just a quick two to three day speed bump on the road of life. For others, it can become an ordeal that may last for weeks. Regardless of the amount of time, the common cold has been wreaking havoc on humans for centuries. And to date, nobody has found a bulletproof cure for this little monster. That is mainly because the common cold is attributed to a virus. There are actually over 200 known viral strains of the common cold. Viruses are tricky because they learn and mutate, making them nearly impossible to treat. When somebody catches a cold, the virus will attach itself to the mucous membranes of the throat and nose. The virus then hijacks the cells that reside in the mucous membranes and forces them to replicate more virus cells. The symptoms of the common cold, sneezing, coughing, sore throat, congestion and fatigue, are all just the defensive attack the immune system mounts when trying to fend off the cold.

If there is no "cure" for the common cold, then how do we deal with it? Well, there are a lot of natural choices out there for fighting the common cold. Some are age-old, tried and true, while others are a little less utilized. We are going to examine three of the most widely known and frequently used ways to alleviate the common cold. Methods we all can use to hopefully bring some relief from the suffering.

1 Chicken Soup

Ever heard the saying "feed a cold, starve a fever"?



Well this actually has some validity to it. When the body is fighting off an infection, there may be a fever involved. However, typically with most colds, this is not the case. When a cold occurs, the body needs nourishment to fight off the attack. This is why chicken soup is a great remedy for the common cold. Hot liquids and bland foods like chicken soup, will help keep the body hydrated and nourished. With proper nourishment, the body can return to a harmonious balance and the cold will diminish. And chicken soup is full of essential vitamins, nutrients and antioxidants known to speed up the healing process. Homemade organic chicken soup is the best option.

2 Ginger

Ginger is an amazing plant with lots of healing properties.



Ginger can be helpful when fighting off the common cold due to its antiviral, anti-inflammatory and expectorant properties. Eating raw ginger or adding it to tea several times a day, can greatly improve cold symptoms quickly. And to enhance the power of ginger, add some lemon and honey, both powerful herbs in their own right. The anti-inflammatory property in ginger makes it great to help relieve a sore throat. Ginger also helps the body sweat out the toxins associated with the common cold. It is recommended to keep ginger handy at all times of the year and use it as a preventive medicine, even when not feeling sick.

3 Get Plenty of Rest

This one seems like a no-brainer.



But in today's society, we really don't take this as seriously as we should. When fighting off an illness, proper rest is pertinent. A number of studies have found sleep deprivation leads to poor immune function. Having good sleeping habits will not only help somebody recover from a cold, but it also helps prevent getting sick to begin with. The rest itself should be quality though, not restless. And this can sometimes be difficult with a cold. This is where a lot of people turn to over-the-counter cold medications that contain alcohol. Alcohol will induce sleep but it won't allow for quality sleep. So try to steer clear of these if possible. And take time off from the everyday grind when needed.

Dealing with the common cold can be difficult but incorporating these important habits, may just be what is needed to kick that cold to the curb. So give them a try next time that nasty cold tries to take control.

3 Ways to Prepare For Seasonal Changes

As the transition from summer to fall begins, changes start to happen externally as well as internally. The days become shorter and the air gets cooler; our bodies change to adapt as well. Here are three ways to prepare for the fall season ahead along with the beginning of the yin cycle.

1 Let go of negativity

The autumn season represents the time when the lungs and large intestine are of the utmost importance. This season is especially an important time to let go of negative energy in your life. Negativity doesn't just affect your psychological health but your physical health as well. You can help get rid toxicity in your life by being aware of the causes and surrounding yourself with positive energy and people who make you happy.



3 Try acupuncture

Acupuncture treatment can help you physically as well as mentally prepare for the change in seasons.



Some find it difficult to let go of the summer season and transition to shorter, cooler days. Acupuncture can ease this transition and make sure your body and energy are flowing properly.

2 Spend time outside

Because fall is focused on the lungs, spending more time outside can help strengthen this organ and increase your immune system as cold and flu season starts to emerge. Spend time in nature away from city pollution where you can breathe clean, cool air. Autumn time is the perfect opportunity to do this and refresh and strengthen the lungs.



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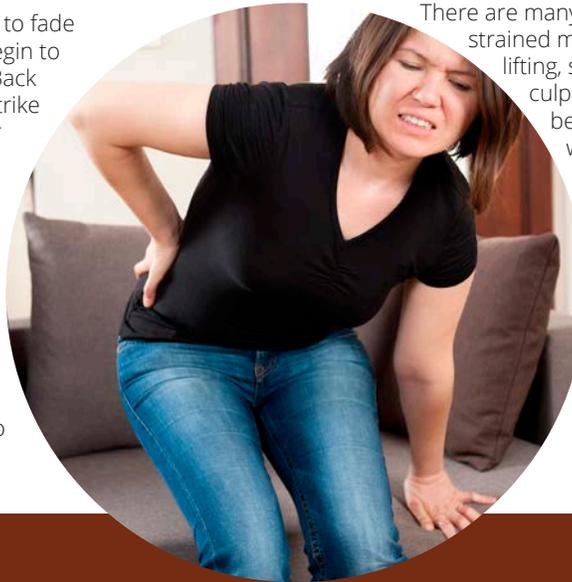
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Seasonal Change and Back Pain

As the air starts to cool and the sun begins to fade with entrance of autumn, many people begin to experience a flare up in back pain symptoms. Back pain is a very common problem; one that will strike four out of five Americans at some time in their lives. In fact, it's one of the top reasons people seek medical care. Unfortunately, back pain isn't always easy to diagnose or relieve. Low back pain in particular can become a chronic, or ongoing, problem.

Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) are very effective in treating back pain and helping keep your body in tune with the seasonal shift. They can also be used together with traditional Western treatments to maximize your healing and recovery.



There are many possible causes for back pain, including strained muscles or ligaments, often caused by improper lifting, sudden movements or traumatic injury. Other culprits include arthritis (whose symptoms can be exacerbated with the onset of cold damp weather), structural abnormalities of the spine, or when the disks between the vertebrae bulge or rupture and press on a nerve.

Practitioners of acupuncture and TCM view back pain another way. An acupuncturist will not only work to relieve your symptoms, but will also work to find and treat the underlying cause of your pain.

Back pain can arise from disharmonies such as:

- 1 Stagnation type pain
- 2 Cold, damp obstruction type pain
- 3 Deficiency type pain

Once I have determined the cause(s) of your back pain, I can create a specific treatment plan designed to address your concerns and boost your overall health and vitality.

Transitioning to Autumn

With autumn approaching and the beginning of the yin cycle, the energy of plants is moving down into their roots, helping the body become aware of the energy of the season. This season is a time for the body to begin gathering energy for the colder months to come.

The lungs and large intestine are the organs associated with fall. The lungs are responsible for the circulation of Qi (the body's natural flow and circulation), and are also very susceptible to cold and illness. For this reason, it is important to stay healthy and warm during the season. If the Qi circulation is weakened, muscles will not be able to warm the body properly.

Autumn Foods: Vegetables of autumn like carrots, sweet potatoes, spinach and kale can help purify and protect your body against free radicals. These color-rich vegetables are packed with beta-carotene, which then turns into vitamin A. Vitamin A is essential for our immune system, especially as the cold and flu season rolls in. These vegetables can also strengthen your lungs and large intestine to fight illness.

Autumn weather becomes more yin, calling for warming dishes. Foods to cook that are in harmony with the season include more sour foods, as well as foods rich in protein and fats.

Vegetables to cook with:

- Carrots
- Winter squash
- Pumpkin
- Broccoli
- Parsley
- Kale
- Turnip greens

Sour/pungent foods to cook with:

- Sourdough bread
- Sauerkraut
- Adzuki beans
- Yogurt
- Ginger
- Garlic

Some find it hard to let go of summer, with the longer days and warm air transitioning into the crisp and shorter days of fall. Acupuncture not only helps the body physically, but mentally as well. Fall is a great time to see an acupuncturist as your body and mind adapt to the changing of the season.

Give your acupuncturist a visit to prepare for the new season ahead and to stay in good health!

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Goji Berries – The Little Red Superfruit



The shriveled red Goji berry doesn't look like much at first, but this Himalayan fruit, otherwise known in Tibet as the "key to eternal youth", is a superfood packed with vitamins, minerals, and amino acids. You can add it to almost any meal, it tastes delicious, and it may add some pep to your step.

Chinese medicine has known about this berry, *Lycium barbarum*, or "wolfberry", for many years, and it's used as an herbal remedy to treat many age related ailments, as it's been known to treat the root and essence of the body, the kidneys, and the liver, which stores blood. You can eat it alone or along with other herbs that boost the benefits to create a formula specific to your individual needs. Your acupuncturist is the best person to assess and create a formula for you.

The Goji has 21 minerals, including beta carotene, and trace elements. It also has a powerful antioxidant called zeaxanthin, B vitamins, and has more vitamin C than oranges. The Goji berry also has fiber so you feel full (hello weight loss!) and has about 13% protein depending on the dosage. The Goji contains lutein, which benefits the eyes, as well as the mentioned beta carotene which also benefits the eyes and skin.

What all of these nutrients tell us is that this berry helps keep the blood more alkaline, white blood cells are fortified along with your immune system, and all the amino acids, vitamins and minerals means oxygen is transported nicely through the body. So what do you get? Well-being, more energy, vitality, stronger immunity, and healthy eyes.

The Goji berry tastes sweet and a bit sour and is bright in color. It's best to buy organic and good quality berries, or you can grow your own.

Some benefits may include improved vision, more energy, lowering of bad cholesterol, increased energy, better sleep, weight loss, improved hair thickness and luster, and less dryness. Goji berries also may help fight depression.

You can include these berries in trail mixes, cereals, or salads, or just eat them straight from your hand. How much to eat to stay healthy? The answer to that depends on your individual needs and palate. Start with a few grams, then a handful, and go from there according to how you feel and what your body is in the mood for.

Goji berries belong to the nightshade family, foods that contain solanine. These foods include tomatoes, potatoes, peppers, and eggplant. Some individuals, like those who have arthritis, may have an allergy to these foods and it is not recommended for them in that case. If you are taking some medications like blood thinners, blood pressure medication, or diabetes medicine this berry may not be right for you. It also is a "warming" food, so refrain if you have a fever or the flu. If you are fine with those foods and don't run too hot, go ahead and indulge in what might become your favorite berry. Benefits may vary depending on the individual, and it's best to start with a smaller amount and see how you feel. If these aren't for you, you can also try similar foods like the acai berry, elderberry, or tart cherries. It's best to eat them by themselves instead of in a juice with other fruits.



5 Ways to Use Goji Berries

Goji berries have been used for their healing and nutritional properties for thousands of years. Traditional Chinese Medicine incorporates goji berries into different meals and healing tonics in order to cleanse the body. Goji berries have been said to have many different health benefits when used as a nutritional and super-herbal tonic. From anti-aging to promoting good eye health, the goji berry works on the body in many ways. Here are five ways for you to use goji berries so they too can benefit you.



- 1 Make a tea.** Goji berries are very popular in teas. Some people swear by goji berry tea, by making it a part of their daily diet. By adding a generous handful of goji berries to a glass of hot water you can reap their healing and restorative properties.
- 2 Eat them raw.** This is the easiest and go-to way to consume goji berries, just eat them! These berries will give off a mild sweet and tangy taste, but can easily be enjoyed and stomachached while raw. Small to medium-sized handfuls of goji berries a day will do the trick.
- 3 Smoothies.** Goji berries are great in smoothies. They take your already healthful snack and increase the benefits. Soak the berries in cold water before adding them to your smoothie in order to get them juicy and hydrated. After the berries are plump in size, add the goji berries to whatever smoothie you are making and blend to your desired consistency.
- 4 Trail Mix.** Traditionally, goji berries have been known to be consumed once they are dried. Dehydrate some berries and add them to your trail snacks for the road!

- 5 Pastries.** I'm sure you have had a blueberry scone before, or even a cranberry one. Try making your breakfast a little more interesting by incorporating goji berries into your pastry intake. Goji berries make for a great addition to scones, muffins and pancakes.

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