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Tip for That #3: Integrative Medicine Competency: Health Conditions (Depression)

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Despite some recent warm temps, today’s snow reminds us that winter can last a long time in Wisconsin. I find many of my patients struggling with depression.

For those who need treatment but prefer to avoid prescription anti-depressants for various reasons (including black box warnings on suicidality) here are some options:

1. **S-Adenosyl Methionine (SAMe)**
   b. Avoid in patients with personal or family history of bipolar

2. **St. John’s Wort (SJW)**
   b. SJW is metabolized through Cyp P450 – can decrease potency of OCPs and many other meds; use SJW cautiously

3. **Bright Light Exposure Therapy (BLET)**
   a. Cheap, effective and important in the dark months of winter
   b. Scroll down to see my smart phrase, which contains references


**Practical Tips:**
- SAMe: 400-800mg po bid; start at 200mg bid and gradually increase (need B12 and folate)
- SJW: 900-1500 mg per day in 2-3 divided doses of an extract standardized to 0.3% hypericin and/or 3-5% hyperforin
- See also Dr. Michelle Crane’s excellent smart phrase with additional options for evaluating and treating depression: PTEDEPRESSIONRESOURCE

I hope you enjoyed this installment of Tip for That. I welcome your feedback.

Stay tuned for:
Tip for That #4 – Integrative Medicine Competency: Health Conditions *(Adrenal Fatigue)*
In Health,

Kristen

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**IMR links** - log in to your IMR, then copy/paste link: [http://integrativemedicine.arizona.edu/program/alum2015/intro_to_integrative_mental_health/depression/11.html#reco](http://integrativemedicine.arizona.edu/program/alum2015/intro_to_integrative_mental_health/depression/11.html#reco)

(Reynolds Smart Phrase: ptedlighttherapy)

**Bright Light Exposure Therapy (BLET)**

- 10,000 Lux 1-2 hours daily (morning is best) improves depression
- Systematic Review BLET (Jorm, 2002)
  - Positive effect seasonal depression
  - Small effect non-seasonal depression
- Meta-analysis (Golden, 2005)
  - BLET or dawn simulation – positive for SAD
  - BLET (NOT dawn simulation) – positive depression
- Non-Rx option for depression in pregnancy

**Criteria for Light Box Selection**

*(Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine)*

There are no definitive criteria for the "best" treatment devices. The Center for Environmental Therapeutics recommends the following:

- Any light box you buy should have been tested successfully in peer-reviewed clinical trials.
- The box should provide 10,000 lux of illumination at a comfortable sitting distance. Product specifications are often missing or unverified.
- Fluorescent lamps should have a smooth diffusing screen that filters out ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV rays are harmful to the eyes and skin.
- The lamps should give off white light rather than colored light. "Full spectrum" lamps and blue (or bluish) lamps provide no known therapeutic advantage.
- The light should be projected downward toward the eyes at an angle to minimize aversive visual glare.

Smaller is not better. When using a compact light box, even small head movements will take the eyes out of the therapeutic range of the light.