



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND UNIVERSITY HEALTH CENTER

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Hints for Speeding Your Recovery from Depression

In addition to psychotherapy and medication, the following are some simple things which will help speed your recovery from depression. The more of them that you can make yourself do, the faster you are likely to feel better.

1. Do not remain in bed or sleep for more than 8 hours a day. Over-sleeping has been shown to increase depressed feelings.
2. Get outside for at least 1/2-hour between 11AM and 2PM. Bright light has been shown to have an antidepressant effect. Getting out of doors even on a moderately overcast day gives you the light you require.
3. Walk briskly, or get some other exercise, for at-least 30-minutes every day. Taking a walk out of doors between 11AM and 2PM takes care of both your need for bright light and your need for exercise.
4. Totally abstain from the use of alcohol and recreational drugs. Alcohol and street drugs both induce depression and prevent antidepressants from working effectively. If you must drink, limit your intake of alcohol to no more than three (3) units of alcohol PER WEEK. (A unit of alcohol is a 12 oz. bottle of beer, a 4-oz. glass of wine, or a 1- 1/2 oz. shot of whiskey.) Totally avoid the use of street drugs.
5. Increase the amount of Omega-3 fatty acids in your diet. There is highly suggestive evidence that increasing one's intake of EPA, one the Omega-3 fatty acids, helps recovery from depression. This can be done most easily by taking a supplement that contains 600mg or 1,000mg of EPA in each capsule. The total daily intake of EPA should be about 5,000mg and it should be divided into three or four doses each day. Capsules containing EPA can be purchased in any health food store. You can order this online, do a google search for "Dale Alexander TwinEPA." Order the product and take 2 capsules three times a day (with meals).¹
6. Avoid the use of products that contain aspartame (Equal or NutraSweet). It has been shown that many people with depression become more depressed when they use these products.²

¹ "Addition of Omega-3 Fatty Acid to Maintenance Medication Treatment for Recurrent Unipolar Depressive Disorder," Boris Nemets, MD, Ziva Stahl, M.Sc., and RH Belmaker, MD, AM J Psychiatry 159:477-479, March 2002

² "Adverse Reactions to Aspartame: Double-Blind Challenge in Patients from a Vulnerable Population," Ralph G. Walton, Robert Hudak, Ruth J. Green-Waite, Biol. Psychiatry v. 34, pp 13-17, 1993.

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<http://www.psycom.net/depression.central.hints.html>

806

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