



Rajah Ayurveda



# DEPRESSION

*The sole purpose of this booklet is to provide information from an Ayurvedic perspective. This information is not intended for use in the diagnosis, treatment, cure or prevention of any disease. If you have any serious acute or chronic health concern, please consult a health professional. If you are seeking for medical advises or you have any queries, our Doctors will be happy to guide you. Check with your Doctor before taking herbs / medicines or following the diet when pregnant or nursing.*

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***“A man must elevate himself by his own mind, not degrade himself. The mind is a friend of the conditioned soul, and his enemy as well” — Bhagavad Gita***

If you fail an important examination, lose a loved one or a job, or get dumped in a relationship, it is normal to feel depressed. But if you remain depressed for more than two weeks, long after the event has passed, then you may have a clinical disorder called depression. Depression is characterized by a sad or blue mood that affects nearly every aspect of your life every day – your family and social relationships, your work or school performance, even your desire to do simple things such as exercise or go out with friends.

Like most mental disorders, the causes of depression are largely unknown. Researchers and clinicians theorize that depression is the result of three related factors – biological, psychological and social. No doctor can tell you how much of any single factor is contributing to the diagnosis of depression within an individual. For some people; the biological factors, such as genetics, may be stronger than the other two. For others; it may be caused mainly by a psychological issue, such as one's personality or way of coping with stress.

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## Messengers of Happiness Neuro Transmitters

*The brain's neurotransmitters are essentially chemical messengers between the brain's neurons (nerve cells), and they strongly affect your mental, emotional, and physical activity (or lack of activity!). Even at rest, our brains are very metabolically active and utilize about 30% of our energy intake. So you can imagine how critically important it is that we provide our brains with a steady amount of nutrition when we're awake and active! We don't want to jeopardize our sense of consciousness, awareness, and enjoyment of life by depriving our minds of healthy food, but we do without realizing it and then we stumble through life in a daze.*



Right from the ancient periods, the relation between mind and soul is well appreciated by Ayurveda. In fact the division into body and mind is purely academic as we cannot have a separate mind or living body in life. They form a continuum. Without the body, the mind cannot exist and without the mind the body cannot remain alive. But it is conventional to see them as separate entities for the ease of understanding. Ayurveda considers that both the mind and body are the substrates of diseases. The classification of diseases into physical and mental is a matter of predominance as to which substrate the disease is more based and in which substrate the disease is manifested first. It is well known that diseases of mind migrate to the body and vice versa.

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Ayurveda defines mind as ‘that entity which is responsible for thinking and is said to have 3 basic qualities viz., Satva, Rajas and Tamas. These are understood by the role they play in the emergence of three different mental response patterns. For example, satwa is understood by self control, knowledge discriminative ability, power of exposition, etc. Rajas is understood by violence, despotic envy, authoritativeness, self adoration, etc meanwhile Tamas is understood by dullness, inactiveness, sleep.

When the various physiological states of Mind like desire, anger, greed, anxiety, worry and fear are within the physiological limits then they are considered as normal and constitute a healthy state of mind. When the physiology of these are disturbed, then they are considered as abnormal and constitute a pathological state of mind; leading to depression. Rajas and Tamas, being two psycho-pathological factors, affect the mind and produce certain mental disorders.

The other causes that may also lead to various mental disorders are:

- Improper utilization of sense faculties
- Willfully going against our intuition
- Transformations that are happening in due course of time

Psychological doshas can spoil our natural state of harmony thus leading to ill-health. When somebody with weak and fragile mind comes in contact with the causes, leading to recollection of negative

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thoughts, fearful memories, false perception, irrelevant thinking, failure to restrain from negative memories and thoughts; this sequence of events repeat and may result into minor to major illness .

### **Don't forget hormones**

*In fact, peri-menopausal women were 1.4 times as likely to report depression and mood swings, according to clinical research studies, and this was independent of additional factors including reported stress. There are a number of mechanisms through which changes in hormones affect brain function; Estrogen and progesterone have direct effects in the brain both help to protect the brain from exogenous and endogenous toxins, working to rebuild the blood-brain barrier, reduce edema and regulate the inflammatory cascade in the event of physical or ischemic trauma.*



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## Snap Out of It

**Be Positive:** It is vital to maintain your mind in a state of expectation of only good events and make the usual mode of your thinking with love based solely on faith and belief.

Anything that is captured in your subconscious mind will directly affect you in the form of emotions, circumstances and events. Therefore, you need to watch closely what thoughts and ideas govern your mind.

Human mind power is unlimited in its potential to create the results you desire, **WHATEVER** they might be. There are no limits with the exception of the limits you place on yourself.

Whether you're consciously aware of it or not, or ready to accept it or not, you're already using your mind power every second of every minute of every day. All experiences arise from unfulfilled desires. If you are focused on various issues and problems, thus will be the reaction of your subconscious mind.

## Depressed???

We all feel sad, lonely or depressed at times. It is a normal reaction to loss, life's struggles or injured self-esteem. But when these feelings become overwhelming, cause physical symptoms and last for long periods of time, they can keep you from leading a normal active life; medical intervention is required.

Conduct	Feelings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not going out anymore</li> <li>• not getting things done at work/school</li> <li>• withdrawing from close family and friends</li> <li>• relying on alcohol and sedatives</li> <li>• not doing usual enjoyable activities</li> <li>• unable to concentrate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• overwhelmed</li> <li>• guilty</li> <li>• irritable</li> <li>• frustrated</li> <li>• lacking confidence</li> <li>• unhappy</li> <li>• indecisive</li> <li>• disappointed</li> <li>• miserable</li> <li>• sad</li> </ul>

Anticipation	Physical
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘I’m a failure.’</li> <li>• ‘It’s my fault.’</li> <li>• ‘Nothing good ever happens to me.’</li> <li>• ‘I’m worthless.’</li> <li>• ‘Life’s not worth living.’</li> <li>• ‘People would be better off without me.’</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tired all the time</li> <li>• sick and run down</li> <li>• headaches and muscle pains</li> <li>• churning gut</li> <li>• sleep problems</li> <li>• loss or change of appetite</li> <li>• significant weight loss or gain</li> </ul>



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## Risk factors

Depression often begins in the teens, 20s or 30s, but it can happen at any age. More women than men are diagnosed with depression, but this may be due in part because women are more likely to seek treatment.

Factors that seem to increase the risk of developing or triggering depression include:

- Certain personality traits, such as low self-esteem and being too dependent, self-critical or pessimistic
- Traumatic or stressful events, such as physical or sexual abuse, the death or loss of a loved one, a difficult relationship, or financial problems
- Blood relatives with a history of depression, bipolar disorder, alcoholism or suicide
- Being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender, or having variations in the development of genital organs that aren't clearly male or female (intersex) in an unsupportive situation
- History of other mental health disorders, such as anxiety disorder, eating disorders or post-traumatic stress disorder
- Abuse of alcohol or recreational drugs
- Serious or chronic illness, including cancer, stroke, chronic pain or heart disease
- Certain medications, such as some high blood pressure medications or sleeping pills (talk to your doctor before stopping any medication)

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## Antidepressants Aren't Necessarily a Quick Fix

Though there are many drugs that have proven to be helpful in treating depression, that doesn't mean it's always going to be that simple. Different patients respond differently to certain drugs, and antidepressants may be habit forming and with serious side effects.

## Complications

Depression is a serious disorder that can take a terrible toll on you and your family. Depression often gets worse if it isn't treated, resulting in emotional, behavioral and health problems that affect every area of your life.

Examples of complications associated with depression include:

- Excess weight or obesity, which can lead to heart disease and diabetes
- Pain or physical illness
- Alcohol or drug misuse
- Anxiety, panic disorder or social phobia
- Family conflicts, relationship difficulties, and work or school problems



- Social isolation
- Suicidal feelings, suicide attempts or suicide
- Self-mutilation
- Premature death from medical conditions

### **Gut Feeling**

There is evidence that depression can be the result of a complex relationship between “gut” bacteria, the brain, and the central nervous system as detailed in Ayurveda.

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## Treatment of Depression

Often, a combination of treatments is the best way to help someone who's depressed.

Stigma and misinformation lead many people to not take depression seriously. Depression isn't the same as a bout of the blues, it doesn't mean that someone is weak, and it often requires medical intervention to treat. Just because you can't see it doesn't mean it's not real.

Ayurveda aims at preservation and promotion of health, and prevention and cure of diseases through the concepts of positive physical and mental health. One among the eight branches of Ayurveda called Graha Chikitsa deals with mind related disorders. Mode of assessment and treatment varies with individuals. The three modalities of treatment that are explained in classics are as follows:-

- Based on logic- It is a treatment in which the medicines, lifestyle, and diet are skillfully planned and administered. This is done after a thorough diagnosis, analysis of the constitution and understanding the minute details of the person.
- Psychotherapy-it is a treatment given to gain control over the mind of the patient and helping them to keep their mind and senses detached from the unwholesome subjects (including stress, anxiety etc).

- Based on faith-soothing chants, meditation, self healing or spiritual practices with positive intent comes under this method.

The ayurvedic approach to treat the condition of depression

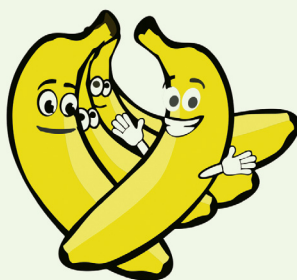
### **Ayurveda has some excellent therapies to manage depression.**

In most of the cases of depression treated in our hospitals; Shirodhara and Nasyam have been proven to be the most effective line of treatments to counter such conditions. Stimulation of vital centers through Shirodhara and Nasyam with proper nourishment of the brain helps improve the pre-existing conditions.

There are medications which are very beneficial for these condition as it bring calmness to the mind, improve the mental faculty and general well being without any adverse effects. As the medicines are herbal based it takes some time to act and long term administration is advised.

### **Yoga in Depression**

Yoga and meditation have received less attention in the medical literature, though it has become increasingly popular in recent decades. By reducing perceived stress and anxiety, yoga appears



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to modulate stress response systems. This, in turn, decreases physiological arousal — for example, reducing the heart rate, lowering blood pressure, and easing respiration. There is also evidence that yoga practices help increase heart rate variability, an indicator of the body's ability to respond to stress more flexibly. For many patients dealing with depression, anxiety, or stress, yoga may be a very appealing way to better manage symptoms. Indeed, the scientific study of yoga demonstrates that mental and physical health are not just closely allied, but are essentially equivalent.

### **A Vicious Circle**

Depressed people often don't have the energy to interact with others, so they withdraw from social situations as much as possible. Also, when they do get out they're often not fun to be with. This only makes the problem worse, because social interaction can help make depressed people feel better, and isolation often only makes them feel even more depressed.

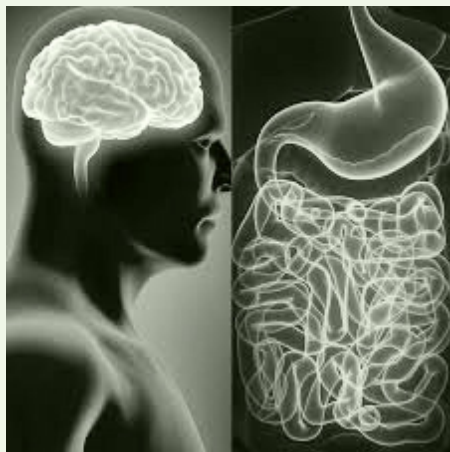
### **Why you might be starving your Brain- Diet**

*Today, many people focus on their weight and “dieting” to slim down. They try countless fad diets and even go so far as to nearly starve themselves for days at a time. However, our bodies and minds need food nutritious food to adequately and optimally perform the basic functions of thinking, moving, healing, protecting us from dis-*

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*ease, and balancing our moods among many other functions. Do you wish you could get more done or be happier, less depressed and more at ease? Then it's possible that based on your diet, you've been starving your brain, and its important neurotransmitters, of the proper nutrition.*



A balanced diet which helps in maintaining the physical and mental health should be followed. Most people with depression lose their appetite and desire to eat. For such people, food must not be forced, or it could lead to vomiting. When such a disinterest in food occurs, fruits can be consumed. A diet rich in fruits is beneficial in the treatment of depression.

- Avoid tea, coffee, alcohol, chocolate and cola, all white flour products, sugar, food colorings, chemical additives, white rice and strong condiments. The diet should be restricted to three meals.
- Eat more fruits and vegetables. spinach, asparagus, broccoli. Include avocados, dried fruits, and bananas

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- Fruits, milk, a handful of nuts and seeds or cereals can be taken for breakfast. Legumes, nuts, and grains (such as oats) are good.
  - Fish rich in omega 3 fatty acids
  - Steamed or cooked vegetables, wheat bread/ chappathi and glass of buttermilk can be taken for lunch.
  - For dinner, green vegetable salad, available sprouts like alfalfa seeds, green gram seeds.
  - Avoid hot, spicy and pungent tastes as these will aggravate the symptoms further. Fluids and fresh vegetables (in salads) must become an important part of every meal. Green tea may be taken occasionally to stimulate the brain. The person must not eat to full capacity.
  - (Maybe Don't) Get Me a Drink

A bottle of beer or a glass of wine might help you unwind after a hard day, but in the long-term, alcoholism is associated with depression. This might be partly because chronic heavy drinking can kill neurotransmitters that are important for good mental health.

### After Birth

*Postpartum depression affects about 10% of new mothers. Do you feel like your mind and body could be performing better? Mind Over Body Ayurvedic perspective.*



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## Lifestyle

- Exercise helps ease Depression; It also even helps prevent the onset of Depression later in life.

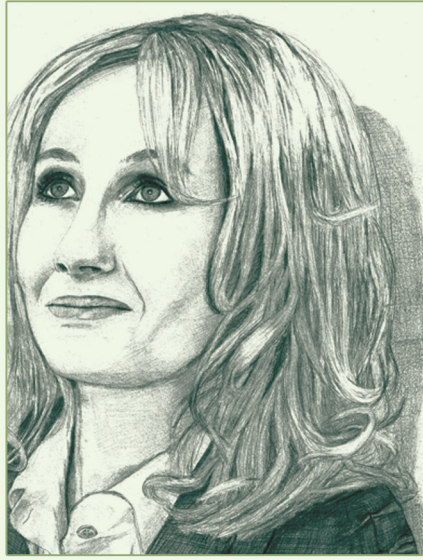
Not only does exercise boost serotonin, endorphins, and other feel-good brain chemicals, it triggers the growth of new brain cells and connections, just like antidepressants do. Best of all, you don't have to train for a marathon in order to reap the benefits. Even a half-hour daily walk can make a big difference. For maximum results, aim for 30 to 60 minutes of aerobic activity on most days.

Moreover, most people struggling with depression have an altered thermoregulatory system. So increasing body temperature with a bit of work out may have calming effect.

- Social support. Strong social networks reduce isolation, a key risk factor for depression. Keep in regular contact with friends and family, or consider joining a class or group. Volunteering is a wonderful way to get social support and help others while also helping yourself.
- Sleep. Sleep has a strong effect on mood. When you don't get enough sleep, your depression symptoms will be worse. Sleep deprivation exacerbates irritability, moodiness, sadness, and fatigue. Make sure you're getting enough sleep each night. Very few people do well on less than seven hours a night. Aim for somewhere between seven to nine hours each night.

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- Stress reduction. Make changes in your life to help manage and reduce stress. Too much stress exacerbates depression and puts you at risk for future depression. Take the aspects of your life that stress you out, such as work overload or unsupportive relationships, and find ways to minimize their impact.
  - Maintaining optimal hormone levels throughout the menopausal transition can not only aide in the management of classical “menopausal symptoms” such as hot flushes and night sweats, but can prevent and treat memory loss and protect the brain from chemical and physical assault.

*“Men and women are not prisoners of fate, but only prisoners of their own minds.” — Franklin D. Roosevelt*



*J.K. Rowling, author of the Harry Potter book series, is one of the most famous and successful authors in the world, she has experienced significant struggles. and even acknowledged that she had thoughts of suicide.*

*“It’s so difficult to describe depression to someone who’s never been there, because it’s not sadness. I know sadness. Sadness is to cry and to feel. But it’s that cold absence of feeling— that really hollowed-out feeling.”*

## OTHER TITLES IN THIS SERIES



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