

Natural Health News

February 2012

EVERGREEN SPA & WELLNESS
ELY, MN

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Sonja Jewell
NTS, CMT, CCWFN

Evergreen Cottage
146 E. Chapman

Ely, MN 55731

Phone: 218-365-2288

Retail Store Hours

Monday-Saturday

10am-6pm

(Closed Sundays)



Listen to Sonja's
"Natural Health
& Wellness Hour"
EVERY
WEDNESDAY
from 6-7pm on
WELY (94.5 FM)
or
listen on-line at
www.wely.com

This time of year, darkness is like a rude house guest: it comes early and stays late. As the days get shorter and the nights longer, your body has to make major adjustments. For some, it can create a series of health issues. It is estimated that one out of every 5 Americans suffers from mild to severe Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) which is classified as depression that comes and goes with the seasons. Some of the symptoms mimic major depression such as loss of enjoyment, fatigue, muscle aches, loss of sex drive, depressed mood, and possibly even suicidal thoughts. The underlying cause of SAD is a biochemical imbalance caused by a lack of light entering through the eyes. That loss causes a drop in serotonin levels in the brain. Normal levels of serotonin are associated with normal mood, appetite, and sleep patterns. When the days get shorter, everyone's level of serotonin decreases, but people who develop SAD seem to be more sensitive to that drop in serotonin and are less able to make physiologic adjustments. Bright Light Therapy (BLT) is a well-known, effective, virtually side-effect-free treatment for SAD. The procedure involves sitting in front of a bank of full-spectrum lights for up to 2 hours at a time. Research shows that this method works best when it is timed to the body's daily rhythms. Another solution is a dawn simulator, which brightens gradually over the course of an hour or more in the morning. This device mimics the natural return of daylight, and provides the benefits of BLT without interrupting your schedule. It is called the Rise & Shine Dawn Simulator (www.verilux.com). Another factor for the development of SAD is stress. Your body's response to stress is a big part of the equation. If you are on the edge of developing SAD, stress can push you over the edge and can affect the severity of your symptoms. Make sure to take time to de-stress regularly. Also, regular, low-intensity exercise, preferably by walking for a minimum of 30 minutes every day, outside, in the natural light, not only reduces stress but will also get light in your eyes and will raise your production of dopamine, a natural mood elevator. Make sure to avoid sugar, candy, high-fructose corn syrup and refined carbohydrates which will cause blood sugar imbalances. Eat wholesome foods rich in omega-3s such as walnuts, wild-caught salmon, sardines, flaxseeds, etc. The brain is largely made of fat and needs fat to operate. Getting good sleep is just as important as getting exercise. There is growing evidence that SAD is associated with low levels of vitamin D. You are almost guaranteed to be vitamin D deficient if you are getting little or no strong sunlight regularly. Sunlight on your skin converts the skin's cholesterol into a compound that is further metabolized by your liver and kidneys into vitamin D3. Because cholesterol is the main building block of vitamin D3, you are almost guaranteed to be D3-deficient if you are taking a cholesterol-lowering drug. The lack of light throughout the fall and winter is significant in our area. Therefore, occurrences of SAD are very common. I highly recommend using a high-quality vitamin D complex by Standard Process or Garden of Life (both are available at the Evergreen Cottage) starting in the fall throughout the winter months. Prevention and having a plan in place prior to winter is the key. Read more on the importance of vitamin D on the next page.

THE IMPORTANCE OF VITAMIN D

Following the advice to avoid excess sun exposure and to apply sunscreen when outdoors has left many of us with a vitamin D shortfall. As the cold and flu season is in full swing, you don't want to run low on vitamin D because it is an important and effective way to rev up your immune defenses. Sunlight and vitamin D are critical to all life forms. The principal function of vitamin D is to promote calcium absorption in the gut and calcium transfer across cell membranes, thus contributing to strong bones and a calm nervous system. Actually, vitamin D does not itself promote healthy bones. Vitamin D controls the levels of calcium in the blood. If there is not enough calcium in the diet, then it will draw from the bones. High levels of vitamin D will actually de-mineralize bone if sufficient calcium is not present. Vitamin D will also enhance the uptake of toxic metals if calcium, magnesium and phosphorus are not present in adequate amounts. Therefore, vitamin D supplementation should never be suggested unless calcium intake is sufficient or supplemented at the same time. Receptors for vitamin D are found in most of the cells in the body and therefore, low vitamin D is associated with several autoimmune diseases, cancer, degenerative diseases and premature aging. Research also suggests that low levels of vitamin D may contribute to metabolic syndrome with associated hypertension, obesity, diabetes and heart disease. The assimilation and utilization of vitamin D is influenced by the kinds of fats we consume. Increasing levels of both polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fatty acids in the diet decrease the binding of vitamin D to D-binding proteins. Saturated fats, the kind found in butter, lard and coconut oil, do not have this effect and nor do the omega-3 fats. D-binding proteins are key to all actions of vitamin D. This is an important point to consider since we have dramatically increased the intake of commercial vegetable oils and decreased the intake of saturated fats over the past 100 years. The most bio-available form of vitamin D comes from animal sources (vitamin D3 or cholecalciferol). Nutrient-rich foods include fish, cod liver oil, animal foods, and eggs (especially egg yolks). For food sources to provide us with vitamin D, the source must be sunlight-exposed...in other words, vitamin D is produced from fat in the fur, feathers, and skin of animals and birds only when exposed to sunlight. This is another reason why it is important to consume free-range and grass-fed meats. In our own bodies, sun exposure converts adequate cholesterol levels into necessary stores of vitamin D. It is important to sunbathe frequently for short periods of time, when UV-B is present, rather than spend long hours in the sun.

FEBRUARY SPECIALS

A. Vogel—Soothing Pine Cough Drops	30% OFF
Theo—Dark Chocolate Bars, variety	30% OFF
Rising Moon Organics—Frozen Ravioli & Pierogis 16 oz.	25% OFF
Woodstock Farms—Extra Firm Tofu 14 oz.	25% OFF
Crofter's—Fruit Spreads, variety	25% OFF
Good Health—Avocado Oil Potato Chips 5 oz.	25% OFF
Ines Rosales—Sweet Olive Oil Tortas	25% OFF
Woodstock Farms—Yogurt Pretzels 8 oz.	25% OFF
Endangered Species—Chocolate Bars variety	20% OFF
Green & Blacks—Chocolate Bars variety	20% OFF
Prince of Peace—Ginger & Honey Crystals	20% OFF
Stash Teas—variety	20% OFF

AND MANY MORE ITEMS!

Organic Roots  Bistro

is still open for business on Thursdays from 10 AM–3 PM
and Fridays & Saturdays from 10 AM–8:30 PM.

Come and try our new WINTER MENU.



“At home | serve the kind of
food | know the story behind.”

Michael Pollan