

# *THE HERBAL ADVANTAGE*

## *Herbal Approaches to Health and Wellness*

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### **Winter Blues? Winter Depression? Or Our Natural Circadian Rhythm?**

All living things in creation “shut in” during winter. Animals go deep into themselves through hibernation to conserve their essence until spring. The days become shorter and plants become dormant to conserve their energies. We humans snuggle by the fire in stillness with a hot cup of tea. Snow covers the earth protecting the essence of life which will in turn be reborn into spring time. In terms of human health, this means the preservation of one’s own resources. The body does not use as much energy during the season of winter. If there is an imbalance in the winter energy, coping with the season can be a challenge. It is important to turn our attention to nutrition, warmth and rest during the winter.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that can occur in many people during the winter due to a decrease in sunlight. The symptoms may include an overall lack of vitality, an increase in appetite, weight gain, an increased desire to sleep, a decrease in energy and ability to concentrate, and a loss of interest in normal activities. These symptoms may be our bodies trying to slow down in a society that insists that we remain active all of the time. The key is to listen to our bodies. If these symptoms become overwhelming or interfere with the quality of your life, please seek medical help. There are many natural herbs that can help to support us during the winter season.



*Roses can help to lift the spirit! A simple cup or two of rose blossom tea taken daily, or rose glycerite added to water or tea, can lift the spirit, preventing or relieving mild depression and giving your energy a boost. during the winter season. Lemon Balm, oatstraw and St. John’s Wort are also herbs to consider.*

*Remember to:*

- Get enough sleep*
- Eat healthy foods*
- Slow down and allow your body to rest*
- Exercise in moderation.*

## Herbs and Food for Immune Support



Herbal medicine is well known for its ability to prevent illness. So in considering what plants we choose to support ourselves through the cold winter months, our primary focus is on those that will safely and effectively help us to maintain our health and wellness. It is important to consider which herbs we have access to in winter, those we have stored away, or those we can afford to purchase.

Great herbs to consider for supporting the immune system include: Echinacea, Osha, Astragalus, Reishi and Shiitaki mushrooms, Ginseng and other adaptogens and Nettles. A more detailed list of immune modulating herbs can be found at [www.holisticwellnessva.com](http://www.holisticwellnessva.com) in the news tab.

### Mushrooms

Mushrooms strengthen your immune system. They are rich in protein, fiber, vitamin C, B vitamins, calcium, and other minerals.

Medicinal mushrooms contain powerful compounds called beta-glucans. These compounds are responsible for Reishi, Shiitake, and Maitake mushrooms having such strong immune enhancing abilities.

### Fermented Foods

Fermented foods are very powerful in boosting your immune system. They contain friendly bacteria that support your digestive system which is the body's first line of defense against harmful bacteria or pathogens. They aid in production of antibodies. Great fermented foods for the winter season include Kefir, natto, kimchee, miso, sauerkraut and yogurt.

## Herbal Approaches for Health and Wellness

*Karen uses herbs nutrition, massage, and craniosacral therapy to support her clients in their wellness goals. She loves to work with individuals who have experienced physical and emotional trauma in their lives and are embarking on a journey to towards peace, joy and healthy relationships. Karen has also had success with individuals suffering with chronic illnesses who are searching for new approaches to support their wellness goals.*

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