

# Natural Ways to Address Seasonal Affective Disorder



increased sleep and daytime sleepiness; loss of interest in work or other activities; slow, sluggish, lethargic movement; social withdrawal; unhappiness; and irritability.

The causes of SAD can include genes, hormones or living in a location where one receives less-than-enough natural light during the autumn and winter months, according to the NIH's website ([www.nih.gov](http://www.nih.gov)).

Kotila has found natural means, including nutrition, supplementation and qigong, to manage her disorder. She avoids gluten, which she has found makes her feel depressed. She takes vitamin D and fish oil, and practices qigong daily.

Massage therapy has been found, in research, to reduce depression, improve immune function, boost mood and increase relaxation. Regular exercise has also been found to alleviate depression.

Light therapy is another form of treatment, and is recommended by the NIH. "Follow your doctor's instructions about how to use light therapy. A common practice is to sit a couple of feet away from the light box for about 30 minutes every day," the website notes. "This is usually done in the early morning, to mimic sunrise."

A company called Light Therapy Products, for example, offers light boxes, light visors, lights that mimic sunrise, books and more, all targeting SAD. Many other companies and products are easily found with an Internet search.

According to Kotila, it's important to tune into one's own needs to combat SAD. "If you think you might have depression issues, seek professional help, but don't assume

When massage therapist Sara Kotila was a teenager, she began experiencing symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which for her manifested as sadness and a desire to get away from people—symptoms she still sometimes experiences today, as an adult, and which don't really work well in a people-focused profession like massage.

"Emotionally, I get sad and weepy, I want to be left alone and I don't really want to interact with or talk to other people," Kotila, of Bedford, New Hampshire, said. "Physically, I feel like I could spend all day in bed; I feel drained of energy."

SAD is classified by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) as a form of depression, and the two conditions share many symptoms, including increased appetite; weight gain; low energy and ability to concentrate in the afternoon;

that anti-depression medication is the only answer," she suggests. "For me personally, I knew I did not want to be put on medication because of the various side effects, so I chose to work with food therapy, which has worked extremely well in my case.

"It's not a cure all—nothing is—but helps make

managing my SAD possible."

If you think you have SAD or any other form of depression, start with a trip to your physician or naturopath rather than self-diagnosing.

—Karen Menehan

## Lymph Drainage for Liver Balance

by Alaya Chikly and Bruno Chikly, M.D., D.O.

There are lymphatic vessels in most viscera, and one of the organs that can positively benefit from lymphatic techniques is the liver. The liver is extremely important for your health, and you will find immediate benefits from lymph drainage therapy when properly applied.

The liver is the largest digestive-exocrine gland in the body, with 500 functions. Imagine how much influence this organ has on your body's homeostasis. Think of the liver in cases of chronic pathology: lack of stamina, detoxification, right-shoulder pathologies, eye problems, hormonal problems and more.

Liver stagnation could be caused by alcohol, food intolerance (to dairy, gluten, sugar and more), allergies, medications and infections. Most livers need lymphatic cleansing.

The liver produces approximately one-quarter to one-third of the body's lymphatic fluid. It has two lobes. The right lobe is physiologically not palpable under the right ribs in adults (except midline). The left lobe can usually be located a little medial to the mid-clavicular line.

In treatment, we look for one to two pathological segments in the liver with lymphatic and fascial stagnation, and release them.

### Liver-care exercise

The lymphatic anatomy is a little complicated and different from other hepatic structures. The separation we make between ascending pathways (toward the right clavicle) and descending pathways (toward the cisterna chyli) is a simplification.

1. Place two flat hands on your right side,

above the diaphragm, and do a layered palpation: connect from the skin, then deeper to the ribs and the endothoracic fascia, to the liver itself.

2. Then, for about three seconds, send the fluid of the right hepatic side superior, toward the right clavicle (supraclavicular fossa) and don't ride on the ribs. (See figure

FIGURE A



FIGURE B



FIGURE C



FIGURE D



A.) Do four to six strokes. Do not effleurage; keep your pressure on the liver, in the same area, during the entire stroke for full benefit. Be aware not to press on the xiphoid, and be cautious of the gallbladder area.

3. For the ascending flow, place two flat hands on the left side above the diaphragm. Send the fluid from this left side to the right clavicle for about three seconds. (See figure B.)

4. Repeat the same procedure from the right lobe and the left lobe of the liver, but this time send the fluid inferior, below the xiphoid, a little bit on the right (cisterna chyli). (See figures C and D.)

The next time you feel tired, stressed or that you ate or drank something that did not work for you, consider "liverating" yourself with this powerful technique.

Bruno Chikly, M.D., D.O., is a graduate of the Medical School at Saint Antoine Hospital in France. In his definitive text, *Silent Waves: Theory and Practice of Lymph Drainage Therapy, Second Edition*, Chikly addresses applications for lymphedema, chronic pain and inflammation. Alaya Chikly is a certified massage therapist with a bachelor's degree in humanities. For more information, visit [www.chiklyinstitute.org](http://www.chiklyinstitute.org).

# Good Eats

## How Sugar Ages Us

by Erin Zimmewicz Williams

It is well known that a high intake of sugary foods and drinks can lead to weight gain, decrease your immune system and increase your risk of diseases like diabetes. Lesser known is how sugar can age your skin and make you

contribute to DNA and protein damage. Genetics can affect the rate of this damage—but over time, no matter what a person's genes, damage creates signs of aging, such as wrinkled skin, joint stiffness or a decrease in cognitive aptitude.

When we eat carbohydrates, we metabolize them into simple sugars. All carbohydrates, from yams to whole wheat to candies, cakes, muffins and sugar, are metabolized into simple sugars.

What makes a carbohydrate good or bad is how fast the sugars are broken down and absorbed. A carbohydrate high in fiber takes longer to break down and is considered a good carbohydrate. A carbohydrate with little to no fiber, such as a donut, juice or high-fructose corn syrup, is considered bad, as it breaks down at a fast pace into simple sugars. This fast breakdown can overload the bloodstream with a lot of sugar at once. When you have a lot of sugar in your bloodstream, we call that high blood sugar.

High blood sugar has myriad ill effects. The most obvious effect is the direct relationship between blood sugar and blood viscosity. Just like when you

use sugar as an additive to make fruit jam thicker, sugar in your bloodstream makes your blood thicker.

Thick blood doesn't circulate into the smaller capillaries well, which is why those with diabetes are at risk for losing their eyesight, or losing use of their toes or other peripheral areas. Thick blood is also harder to pump, increasing blood pressure and your risks of cardiovascular diseases.


look older. The same processes that make you look older can also age the blood vessels, ligaments, tendons and bones in the body. A high sugar intake also increases your risks for cardiovascular disease and increases cognitive decline.

Aging can be thought of as a progressive accumulation of injuries affecting cell and organ function. Injury occurs from excess exposure to the sun or other free radicals, smoking, dehydration, toxins and sugar. These factors all

Disease prevention begins with eating a diet low in sugar and rich in antioxidants. Antioxidants protect the body against cell-membrane damage that can lead to disease, and they slow the aging process.

In addition to eating an antioxidant-rich diet, reducing the amount of exposure to sources of environmental and dietary toxins is also important. Antioxidants include vitamins A, C and E, as well as selenium and zinc. On top of a balanced diet rich in antioxidants, you want to have adequate protein for cellular metabolism.

Visit [www.massagemag.com/glycation](http://www.massagemag.com/glycation) to read "Not So Sweet," and learn how high blood sugar is related to glycation, which can cause stiff joints and ligaments.

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