



The Lifestyle and Culinary Medicine NEWSLETTER

This Month's Focus:

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

December is Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD awareness month. This month helps raise awareness about SAD, a type of depression that is related to change in seasons, beginning in early winter and ending in spring.

This mood disorder is related to lack of light in winter months.

This lack of light disrupts circadian and neurochemical pathways, leading to the development and exacerbation of SAD in susceptible individuals. Bright light therapy is effective in reversing these effects, underscoring the central role of light in the pathogenesis and treatment of SAD.

This month, we encourage you to check in with yourself and your loved ones for noticeable changes in energy and mood. If you find yourself feeling consistently low, please do not hesitate to mention it during your next visit or schedule an appointment to address. Help is available to keep your spirits bright!

Wishing you holidays filled with the kind of light that only joy, peace, and good health can bring.

With care,
Dr Lateef.



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Monthly Cookbook Suggestion

**GOOD FOOD, GOOD MOOD: 100 NOURISHING RECIPES TO
SUPPORT MIND BODY AND WELLNESS**

BY TAMARA GREEN AND SARA GROSSMAN

This book links recipes to mood benefits, helping you understand how specific foods can reduce stress, boost energy, and improve sleep. It will help you to make actionable changes to help with meal planning.



Seasonal Affective Disorder

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (SAD) IS A SUBTYPE OF MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER CHARACTERIZED BY RECURRENT DEPRESSIVE EPISODES THAT OCCUR SEASONALLY, MOST COMMONLY DURING THE FALL AND WINTER MONTHS WHEN DAYLIGHT HOURS ARE SHORTER.

A lack of light is a key factor in the development of seasonal affective disorder (SAD), primarily by disrupting circadian rhythms and reducing retinal light input, which in turn affects mood regulation.

This lack of light impairs the ability of affected individuals to synchronize their circadian rhythms with the external environment, resulting in changes in sleep, mood, and behavior.

The retina's sensitivity to light, particularly through melanopsin-containing ganglion cells, is decreased in individuals with SAD, and this deficit is exacerbated during periods of low light, further increasing vulnerability to depressive symptoms.

The insufficient light exposure also alters dopamine and serotonin signaling in the brain, both of which are critical for mood regulation.

SYMPTOMS:

Depressed mood, anhedonia, low energy, hypersomnia, increased appetite (especially for carbohydrates), weight gain, difficulty concentrating, and social withdrawal.

ONSET AND DURATION:

Symptoms typically begin in late fall or early winter and remit in spring or summer.

DIAGNOSIS:

Based on clinical criteria—recurrent depressive episodes with a seasonal pattern for at least two consecutive years, with full remission.

TREATMENT:

FIRST-LINE: Light therapy (10,000 lux for 20–30 minutes daily in the morning)

OTHER OPTIONS:

antidepressant medications (SSRIs, bupropion),
cognitive behavior therapy, and lifestyle modifications (increased outdoor activity, exercise)

PROGNOSIS:

Generally good with appropriate treatment; symptoms tend to recur annually if untreated.



MIND Diet:

THE MIND DIET IS A HYBRID OF THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET AND THE DASH (DIETARY APPROACHES TO STOP HYPERTENSION) DIET. ITS CORE FOCUS DIRECTLY ADDRESSES SEVERAL NUTRIENT DEFICIENCIES AND PHYSIOLOGICAL FACTORS LINKED TO LOW MOOD AND SAD.

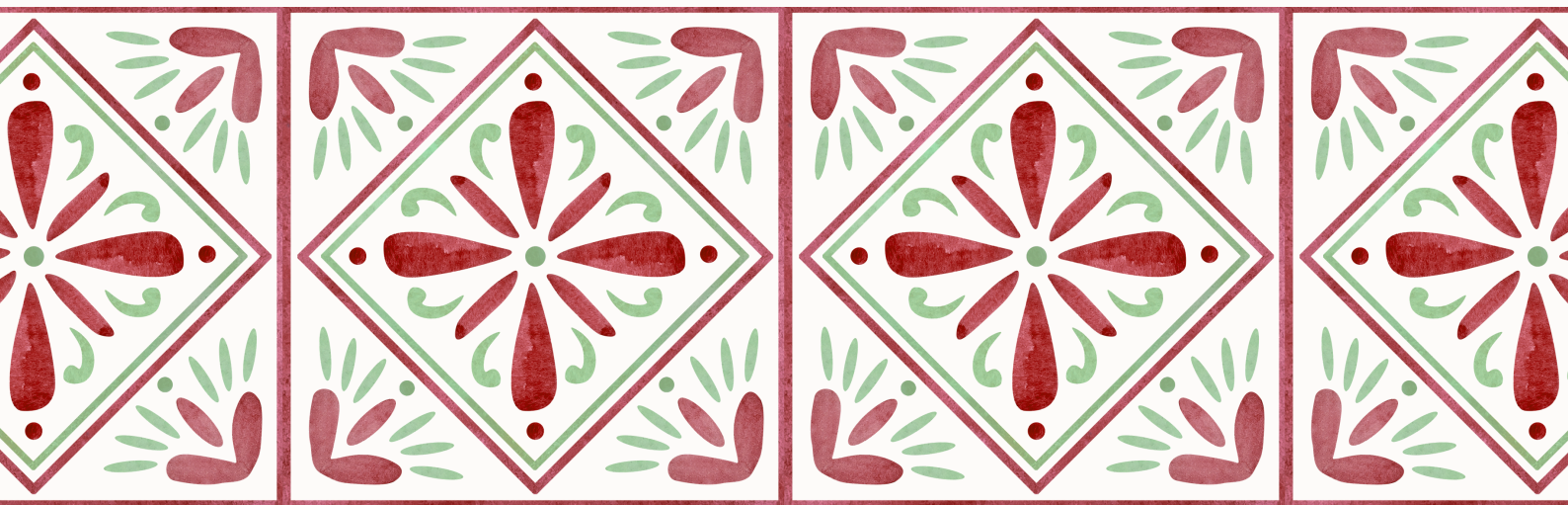
(Mediterranean-DASH Intervention for Neurodegenerative Delay) was primarily created to prevent cognitive decline and dementia. However, because it is rich in brain-boosting, anti-inflammatory nutrients, it naturally offers significant mental health benefits.

The MIND diet is high in antioxidants and anti-inflammatory compounds from vegetables, berries, and olive oil.

Chronic inflammation in the body and brain is strongly linked to the development and persistence of depression. By reducing this inflammation, the MIND diet helps support a healthier brain environment.

The MIND diet emphasizes the following foods, which are crucial for neurotransmitter production and mood regulation:

1. **Fatty Fish** (e.g., salmon, Mackerel) are high in omega-3 Fatty Acids (EPA/DHA). These are structural components of brain cell membranes and are known to have antidepressant effects. Low Omega-3 levels are frequently observed in people with depression.
2. **Leafy Greens & Beans** are high in B Vitamins especially Folate and Vitamin B12: These vitamins are essential for the production of neurotransmitters like serotonin and dopamine, which regulate mood. SAD and depression are sometimes linked to B vitamin deficiencies.
3. **Berries** (especially blueberries) are high in flavonoids and antioxidants: These compounds help combat oxidative stress and protect brain cells, which can otherwise be damaged by chronic stress and low mood.
4. **Whole Grains: Complex Carbohydrates:** These provide a slow, steady supply of glucose—the brain's primary fuel source—and help stimulate the production of the mood-boosting neurotransmitter serotonin.



Movement Tip:

Here is your prescription for exercise for month of December!

Unlock Optimal Health: The Research-Backed Power of a Daily Walk:

Frequency: three days per week

Intensity: moderate (brisk walk)

Time: 30 minutes per day

Type: Walking (or any other aerobic activity that you like)

MASTERING CONSISTENCY:

SIMPLE STRATEGIES TO KEEP MOVING

Walk 10 minutes before work (park your car farthest from your work)

Walk 10 minutes at lunch

Walk 10 minutes at the end of your work (back to your car)

This routine completes the recommended daily exercise.

This is much easier than doing 30 minutes at one particular time of the day.

Start today!!



Zucchini, Pea & Orzo Salad

RECIPE OF THE MONTH: (SERVES 4)

Ingredients:

½ lb. orzo

1 large zucchini, sliced or diced

2 large shallots, sliced or diced

1 cup frozen peas

3 garlic cloves, crushed

½ cup feta cheese

1 lemon, juiced

1 tbsp lemon zest

¼ cup olive oil

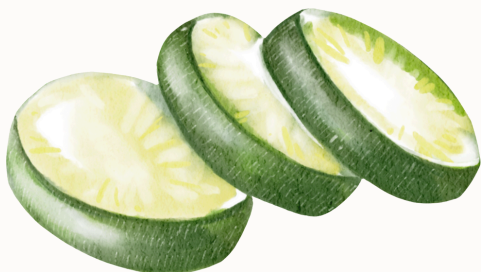
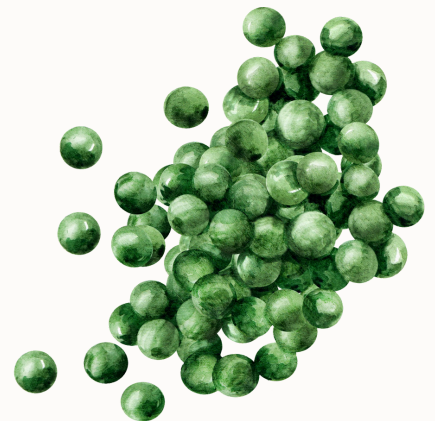
1 tsp salt

1 tsp pepper

1 tsp thyme

Instructions:

1. Heat 2 tbsp olive oil in a skillet and add zucchini and onions. Sauté for 5-8 min and then add salt and pepper and crushed garlic.
2. Boil water for the orzo and cook according to package directions. With 5 minutes of cook time left, add the frozen peas to the pot. Drain and add to a large mixing bowl.
3. Add in the cooked zucchini and onions to the bowl.
4. Add in the rest of the olive oil, lemon juice, lemon zest, salt, pepper, thyme, and feta cheese.
5. Mix together and serve!



We are excited to have Thuhanh Johnson, CNP to be a part of Lateef Family and Lifestyle Medicine.

Her addition means more appointment availability and a wider range of same-day services, ensuring you and your family get the high-quality, comprehensive care you need, faster.

Hours for Thuhanh Johnson:

Tuesday: 1-5pm

Wednesday: 1-5pm

Friday: 1-5pm



Happy Holidays!

As the year draws to a close, we want to take a moment to send our warmest wishes to you and your loved ones. We are immensely grateful for the trust you place in us for your care. It is a true privilege to serve our community, and we look forward to continuing to support your health journey in the new year.

May your holiday season be filled with joy, peace, and good health. We wish you all the best for a wonderful New Year!

Warmly,
Lateef Family and Lifestyle Medicine.

HOLIDAY HOURS:

Please note that our office will be operating on adjusted hours:
Closed: 12/25/25 and 12/26/25

Resuming Normal Hours: 12/29/25 everyday 9-4:30pm