

Ways to Increase Your Serotonin Levels

Go Outside

Bundle up and spend at least 30 minutes outdoors. Even on cloudy days, being outside can help increase your serotonin levels.

Rise and Shine

Keep a regular sleep schedule and aim for 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night. Keeping a normal sleep schedule will help to maintain consistent levels of serotonin so that your body and mind are balanced every day.

Eat Seasonal Foods

Many nutrients that your body lacks in the winter can be found in seasonal foods. Eat brightly colored vegetables and fruit, like apples and squash, as well as complex carbs like beans and lentils.

Exercise

Move your body for at least 30 minutes each day. The Department of Athletics and Recreation offers a variety of opportunities to be active.

Visit athletics.uchicago.edu to learn more.

Try a Light Box

Attend the Breathing Room on Thursdays from 3-5pm in Ida Noyes 034 to try our light box.

Visit wellness.uchicago.edu to learn more.

Get Social

Stay connected with friends and family for support. Talk on the phone, try new activities and plan social events with new and old friends to bring everyone together.

Visit wellness.uchicago.edu to learn more.

FIND YOUR
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SPOT
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The shorter days, colder weather and reduced hours of sunlight can leave anyone feeling melancholy, irritable, or tired during these winter months. To combat these feelings, commonly known as “winter blues,” studies have found that increasing light exposure is associated with higher levels of the hormone serotonin.

For your body to function, exposure to light is imperative to help regulate your serotonin and melatonin levels. When the sun sets, the pineal gland signals the production of melatonin to increase, which in turn signals to the body that it is time to sleep. In the morning when sunlight enters the eye, the pineal gland signals the production of serotonin to increase and melatonin to decrease.

Serotonin helps keep you awake, elevates your mood and brings emotional stability, so you can look at the sunny side of your day. The winter months can severely upset the normal chemical balance in your body, so getting enough light exposure is imperative for your health.

If you think that you or someone you know may be experiencing symptoms of depression, increased sleep or fatigue, moodiness, social withdrawal, increased appetite with weight gain, and/or difficulty concentrating, please contact Student Counseling Services for a confidential consultation at (773) 702-9800.

Visit wellness.uchicago.edu for study references and resources.