

## Bright Light Therapy Eases Depression

Among older adults, major depressive disorder is a prevalent condition that can be debilitating because it often is accompanied by disturbances of the body's natural clock, or circadian rhythm. Ritsaert Lieveise, from VU University Medical School (The Netherlands), and colleagues enrolled 89 men and women, ages 60-plus, assigning each randomly to one of two groups: in the first group, participants utilized a light-therapy box, that emitted pale blue light, each morning for one hour for 3 weeks, the rest of the study participants (control group) were assigned boxes that emitted a dim red light, which has no known effects on the human body. After three weeks of treatment, the researchers found, the light-therapy group showed a greater improvement in scores on a standard measure of depression symptoms. Three weeks after the therapy ended, more people in the light-therapy group exhibited marked drops in depression scores: 50% of the light-therapy patients, compared to 34% of controls. The team concluded that: "In elderly patients with [major depressive disorder], [bright light therapy] improved mood, enhanced sleep efficiency, and increased the upslope melatonin level gradient. In addition, [bright light therapy] produced continuing improvement in mood ... after discontinuation of treatment."

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Ritsaert Lieveise; Eus J. W. Van Someren; Marjan M. A. Nielen; Bernard M. J. Uitdehaag; Jan H. Smit; Witte J. G. Hoogendijk. "Bright Light Treatment in Elderly Patients With Nonseasonal Major Depressive Disorder: A Randomized Placebo-Controlled Trial." *Arch Gen Psychiatry*, Jan 2011; 68: 61 - 70.