The sun at noon on a clear day emits 100,000 lux; the lights in your home are 100 to 200 lux.

Another option is to replace some of the light bulbs and fluorescent tubes in your house with full-spectrum bulbs and tubes, which provide the closest thing going to natural sunlight.

If you’re really blue when winter rolls around, look into light therapy. In Linda’s case, it only took five days of treatment before her mood lifted, her energy returned and her carbohydrate cravings disappeared.

**Beating depression drug-free**

Simple lifestyle changes, such as getting enough sleep and eating a good diet, are also enough to improve mood in many people. Equally important is regular physical activity. Because exercise elevates endorphins and other mood-enhancing brain chemicals, it is perhaps our single most potent mood elevator.

An effective herbal antidepressant is 5-hydroxytryptophan (5-HTP), which is a natural precursor to serotonin. A dose of 30 to 50 mg at bedtime on an empty stomach is

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**St. John’s Wort:**

**The Sunshine Herb**

*Terry Willard, CIH, PhD*

How does St. John’s wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), the much-publicized herb for depression, really work? This question has been debated among academics and researchers in both Europe and North America for the last several years.

Several European companies claim that to get results for depression, we have to use St. John’s wort with a specific amount (0.3 per cent) of hypericin present. However, it was proven back in 1996 that hypericin is not the active ingredient for the antidepressant function of St. John’s wort; even with the hypericin removed, it still works as an antidepressant. In fact, after spending millions of dollars and years of study, we finally know what the active ingredient of St. John’s wort is...St. John’s wort! It is the whole herb and nothing but the herb.

There is no doubt St. John’s wort alleviates mood disorders, as we use it for literally thousands of patients who come through our clinic every year. It is more effective than most pharmaceutical antidepressants. In Germany, St. John’s wort is prescribed five times more often than pharmaceuticals for depression. This still doesn’t tell us how it works.
often enough to lift mood and facilitate sleep. It may safely be increased to as much as 100 mg three times a day over several weeks.

On a final note: If you suffer from severe depression, seek medical help immediately. And remember, do not abruptly discontinue a prescription antidepressant. Do so only under the supervision of your physician.

Julian Whitaker, MD, has practised medicine for more than 26 years. A longtime advocate of healthy living, he is the founder of the Whitaker Wellness Institute Medical Clinic in Newport Beach, Calif., and editor of the monthly newsletter, Health and Healing. Dr. Whitaker has also written eight books, including Reversing Hypertension, Reversing Diabetes and Reversing Heart Disease (Warner Books). For more information, visit drwhitaker.com or call 1-800-539-8219.

One thing we do know is that it blossoms and matures when the sun is at its height in June each summer. In fact, levels of several of the active constituents are directly determined by the amount of available sunlight. In cloudy years, the chemical levels are low, and vice versa. I like to think of St. John's wort as a herbal solar battery that captures the sun's energy. This is why I recommend it in the short days of winter for people who feel a bit under the weather.

St. John's wort is effective in most cases of SAD. We can use the “solar collector” function of St. John's wort to release energy to us in the winter, when we are solar-deprived. The normal dosage of St. John’s wort is 300 mg taken three times daily.

You know the birds worked out a solution to this problem years ago. They just flew south! So, with that said, I'm packing my bags and heading off to the Aloha state.

Terry Willard, CH, PhD, is a practitioner, teacher and director of the Wild Rose College of Natural Healing in Calgary, Alta. He has written several books on natural medicine, including his most recent, Dr. Terry Willard's Encyclopedia of Herbs (Key Porter Books, 2002).

We invite your feedback at editorial@tearnalive.com. For more information, please search “seasonal affective disorder” or “depression” at alivepublishing.com.