

Air Purifiers

nature's antidepressant



There's something special about the air around a waterfall, at the beach, or in a forest after it rains. The humidity creates negative air ions, which cleanse the air by removing contaminants from dust, mold, allergens, and cigarette smoke. Air tends to feel fresher and cleaner after using them. These negative air ions also treat depression and improve sleep.

If you find it hard to believe that these can really lift depression you're not alone. Researchers were originally so skeptical of this technology that they actually used it as a placebo treatment. To test therapies, scientists compare them to fake treatments in order to make sure the benefits they see are not just a placebo effect. Back in the 1990s, they tried using air ionizers as a placebo for depression, but to their surprise the placebo actually worked. Further studies confirmed those observations: the negative air ionizers had an effect almost as strong as an antidepressant.

Negative air ions are particularly missing from indoor life, as they are depleted by heating and air conditioning systems and dehumidifiers.

What remains a mystery about negative ions, however, is how they work. Scientists suspect the effects may be linked to the ease with which ionized air moves from the lungs throughout the body, improving circulation. Their cleansing effects may also be part of the mechanism, as we know that inflammation and allergies are linked to higher levels of depression.

You could get some of the benefit from negative ions by leaving the windows open or using a Himalayan salt lamp, but it's unlikely that will bring the intensity needed to treat depression. For that we recommend a clinically tested air ionizer.

Purchasing a Device

A good air ionizer needs to produce enough negative ions to treat depression. It also needs

to minimize ozone, which can be a dangerous byproduct of some devices. The team at Columbia University who tested these devices recommend the

Wein VI-2500 High-Density Ionic Air Purifier
Amazon \$75



How to Use the Ionizer

In the original studies, people sat next to the ionizer for 30 minutes in the morning. However, an easier method has been developed that lets it work while you sleep. Plug the ionizer into a wall timer and program it to turn on 90 minutes before you wake up, and turn off when you awake. Make sure to use a timer that won't wake you up with a loud *click* (e.g. try Digital Programmable Timer Socket Plug Wall Home Plug-in switch Energy-Saving Outlet (DT-01), ASIN# B00WHPNON6, \$13 on Amazon).

Set up

Place the ionizer on a sturdy surface, 2-3 feet from your head. To maximize the flow of negative ions, it should sit at least 2 feet from a wall and at least 2-3 feet off the floor. Walls tend to pull the negative ions away from you, as do electronic devices.

Remove any electronic equipment near where you sit during treatment sessions, including computers, smartphones, clocks, radio, and TV. If these objects are placed at the far side of

the room, you become the best grounded object of ion flow, which maximizes the ion dose of your treatment.

Rotate the antenna-like ion emitter (wand) located on the back of the unit into an upright position. While tightly gripping the base of the plastic tube, bend the top section slightly forward, in the direction you will be sitting or sleeping. To maximize the benefit, your distance should be about 3 ft (90 cm) from the wand.

Plug the power supply unit into an outlet, and the other end into the receiver on the back of the unit. Press the switch on the top right corner of the ionizer to power up. The red status light on the right side of the face of the unit will be illuminated, and the ion monitor on the left should start blinking. Negatively charged ions will immediately start spreading into the room, with the flow coming from the emitter tip.

Static electricity is likely to build up around the device so you may get a static shock when touching it. To prevent this turn it off before touching.

For more information, search “Negative air ionizer” at www.cet.org.

—Chris Aiken, M.D., updated 3/20/2017,
adapted from www.cet.org.