

In Pain? Your Serotonin Levels May be Too Low

For many years, tryptophan, a precursor for serotonin - a naturally occurring substance in the body which rises especially during sleep and allows us to reach a more restful state, was used to treat many conditions, including insomnia and depression, as well as withdrawal symptoms from smoking, alcohol, cocaine, etc. A recent study also demonstrated that patients with Fibromyalgia, have lower than normal levels of tryptophan in their blood.

Serotonin is a necessary element in our blood stream which allows for normal function. A few years ago, a tainted batch of tryptophan came into this country from Japan and was sold to the American population, which prompted shows like 60 Minutes and 20/20 to alert us to the problem. Rather than monitoring the quality of this beneficial supplement, the FDA overreacted by pulling all tryptophan from the shelves and has prevented further sale in the United States.

Fortunately there is still hope for those in need with a modified version of tryptophan called 5-HT Tryptophan. It is available in the health food stores and should be taken in the evening before bed because it causes one to become sleepy. It should also be taken in short trial periods of one to two months at a time then discontinued for a month or so or until the symptoms return.