Why is Light Therapy Important Today?

  
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Paying attention to our brain’s well-being ensures that our mental health and cognitive abilities are in top shape. Some excellent ways to take care of your brain health are exercising, socializing, and having a nutritious diet. However, many Americans miss one factor they don’t realize is crucial for their minds — light.  
  
Sunlight is essential in regulating serotonin and melatonin. These are connected to mood and cognitive function. Yet [Verywell Mind reports that despite the benefits of sunlight](https://www.verywellmind.com/the-mental-health-benefits-of-sunlight-5089214), around a billion people worldwide have insufficient exposure to it. Unfortunately, not everyone can have ample sunlight where they are. As a solution, they can try out light therapy. Here’s what you need to know about this vital treatment.

How does light therapy work?

Light therapy is an indoor treatment used to promote cognitive function and treat various mental health conditions. It does this by using artificial light to simulate both sunshine and its effect on our brains. This allows light therapy to boost the production of melatonin and serotonin in your body. It also helps you receive a dose of vitamin D, which is essential for the immune system, muscular health, and mental health.  
  
The treatment uses light devices like a light therapy box or lamp, which emit bright light, or [headset devices like the Vielight or the Cognitolite](https://www.quietmindfdn.org/blog/what-is-photobiomodulation), which emit infrared light. Depending on the device used, patients are instructed on the optimal distance from the light and the duration needed to get their daily dose.

How can light therapy help you?

One of the most common conditions that light therapy addresses is seasonal affective disorder (SAD) — also called the winter blues or seasonal depression — which, as its name suggests, is a kind of depression tied to the changing of the seasons. Light therapy works since it mimics the natural sunlight that cooler seasons lack.  
  
Light therapy sessions have shown immediate improvements in cognitive performance, mood, and energy. As such, it’s been used to address various mental health conditions and circadian rhythm disorders. Most importantly, it can also benefit our cognitive function to arrest the development of dementia and other neurodegenerative diseases.

What do you need to consider before going into light therapy?

As long as you stick to the prescribed distance and duration according to your light therapy device, the treatment is generally harmless. However, people with particular health conditions may not be suited for the treatment. The biggest risks in light therapy are skin and eye damage, especially for those with preexisting medical conditions. It may also harm those taking medications that heighten one's sensitivity to light. In these cases, prolonged periods of light therapy may manifest in sunburns or dermatitis.  
  
If any of these may apply to you, consult your physician before trying light therapy. Consider a telehealth consultation if you can’t afford or find a doctor to consult, especially as [America is currently experiencing a doctor shortage](https://www.ama-assn.org/practice-management/sustainability/overcome-doctor-shortage-get-rid-obstacles-primary-care). Pennsylvania is working to become part of the Interstate Medical Licensure Compact, allowing doctors to practice telehealth across states. So [remote physicians in Delaware](https://www.wheel.com/clinicians/telemedicine-physician-jobs-in-delaware) — where many doctors who work in telehealth specialize in primary care — can treat patients in Greater Philadelphia and vice versa for greater access and affordability. By availing of these services, you can have the overall state of your health diagnosed and see how you can safely benefit from light therapy.  
  
Light therapy can help expose us safely to light, benefitting many brain areas. By ensuring that you can safely make use of this treatment, you can improve your mental health and prolong your cognitive function. For more information on light therapy, you can [check us out here on Quietmind](https://www.quietmindfdn.org/blog).

Article was specially written for <https://www.quietmindfdn.org/> by Alice Palmer