

More than 350 million people on our planet suffer from depression, and it also has a profound effect on their loved ones. One of the most popular treatments, SSRI antidepressants, is risky, expensive, and not terribly effective. This has prompted some scientists to look for alternatives, and it appears they may have found a good solution in the form of magnesium.

This mineral is vital for many of our body's functions, including our blood pressure, heart rhythm and bone strength. It also helps fight inflammation in the body. Now, scientists from the University of Vermont's Larner College of Medicine have found promising results after a clinical trial involving the use of over-the-counter magnesium tablets in depressed patients.

In the blocked and randomized crossover trial of 126 adults using outpatient primary care clinics, participants with mild to moderate depression were studied over the course of 12 weeks. Some participants were given 248 milligrams of magnesium each day for the course of six weeks followed by six weeks without it, whereas those in the control group received no treatment for six weeks followed by six weeks of magnesium. All participants were given biweekly assessments of their depression symptoms.

Those who took the elemental magnesium chloride noted clinically significant improvements in anxiety symptoms and measures of depression. On the Patient Health Questionnaire 9, which asks patients nine questions to diagnose and then classify depression, participants scored six points lower on average during their time taking magnesium.

Best of all, they experienced these improvements after just two weeks of taking the magnesium. In addition, patients of all ages and depression types tolerated the supplements well and noted similar levels of effectiveness.