

Pocket Protocol for Light Therapy	
First-line use	Seasonal affective disorder (start two weeks before typical onset of depression, then taper off over two weeks in the spring)
Second-line use	Nonseasonal depression, bipolar depression, antidepressant augmentation, depression after traumatic brain injury, shift work disorder, insomnia, delayed sleep phase disorder
Third-line use	Any season: PTSD, fibromyalgia Winter use: ADHD, bulimia, sexual dysfunction in men
Reliable brands	Carex Day-Light Classic or Classic Plus (\$120) Northern Light Technologies BOXelite OS (\$200)
Specs	Intensity: 10,000 lux is optimal, less than 3,000 lux is ineffective Screen size: at least 12" x 15" Wavelength: white light (around 509 nm)
Start time	Depression and other disorders: early morning (5:00–8:00 am; can use AutoMEQ rating scale at www.cet.org to determine ideal time) Bipolar depression: midday (12:00–2:00 pm) Insomnia: 4:00–5:00 am
Duration	30–120 minutes, with longer duration for treatment-resistant cases or boxes with < 10,000 lux. In bipolar disorder, titrate gradually to prevent mania (start 15 minutes/day, raise by 15 minutes each week toward 60 minutes)
Positioning	Sit so the bottom third of the box is at eye level, then tilt the box so it hovers at an angle of 30–45 degrees over your head, keeping your eyes within 12–14 inches of the box; you can read, eat, or use a laptop while under it
Warnings	Do not use after 2:30 pm (or it will disrupt circadian rhythms) Do not look directly into the box (angle eyes downward) Glasses are OK, but do not wear sunglasses or a hat during light therapy
Troubleshooting	For difficulty waking up, use a dawn simulator (see <i>TCPR</i> , Jan 2019)
Risks	Patients with glaucoma, cataracts, or retinopathy should be under the supervision of an ophthalmologist Caution with photosensitive conditions (eg, systemic lupus erythematosus) or when taking photosensitive medications (eg, lamotrigine, tricyclics, antipsychotics)
Side effects	Headache, eye strain, nausea, insomnia

From the Article:
 “Light Therapy: Good for What Ails You?”
 by Edmund M. Higgins, MD.
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