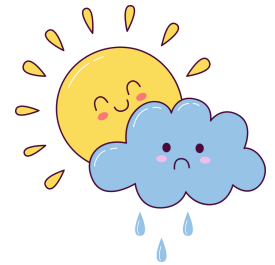


Boost Your Wellbeing: Seasonal Affective Disorder Explained

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that typically occurs during the fall and winter months of the year. Shorter days and less daylight are thought to change the brain's chemical balance, causing the symptoms of depression. If you or someone you know has thoughts or feelings of suicide or self-harm, it is important to seek immediate medical attention!



Two Types of Seasonal Affective Disorder

- **Fall Onset**
 - Also called winter depression. These symptoms begin in the fall/early winter months and often decrease during the summer months.
- **Spring Onset**
 - Also called summer depression. This is much less common than the fall onset, but these symptoms begin in the spring and wrap up around the beginning of fall/winter.

Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Increased sleep and daytime drowsiness
- Loss of interest and pleasure in activities previously enjoyed
- Social withdrawal
- Grouchiness and anxiety
- Feelings of guilt and hopelessness
- Fatigue
- Decreased sex drive
- Decreased ability to focus
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Increased appetite
- Weight gain
- Physical problems, such as headaches.



Risk Factors for SAD

- Family history.
 - Those with a family history of SAD or another form of depression are more likely to get SAD.
- Having major depression or bipolar disorder. Symptoms of depression can worsen seasonally if you have one or both of these disorders.
- Living far from the equator. Living far north or far south away from the equator is more likely to develop SAD, due to either the lack of sunlight in the winter months or the surplus of sunlight in the summer months.
- Low levels of vitamin D.
 - Vitamin D is produced in the skin when it is exposed to sunlight, and it can help with serotonin levels. Lacking vitamin D, either by not getting enough of it through food or sunlight, can have an effect on serotonin levels in the body.

Source: Johns Hopkins University

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Did you know?
According to the
National Institute of
Mental Health, an
estimated 10 million
Americans are
affected by SAD each
year.

Things You Can Do to Alleviate Symptoms Of SAD

- First seek help. If you think you may be depressed see a healthcare professional.
- Set realistic goals in light of depression. Do not take on too much at once, and break big tasks up into small ones to alleviate stress.
- Try to be with other people and confide in someone. It is better to be with someone than being alone and secretive.
- Do things you enjoy to make you feel better.
- Get regular exercise.
- Expect your mood to get better slowly over time, not right away.
- Eat healthy, well balanced meals, looking specifically at the 5 food groups (grains, proteins, dairy, fruits, and vegetables).
- Stay away from alcohol and drugs.
- Delay big decisions until the depression has lifted. Whether it's deciding to get married, divorced, or getting a new job, talk to someone who knows you well first. Don't make that big life change so quickly.
- Try to be patient and positive.
- Lean on your family and friends, let them help you when you need it.



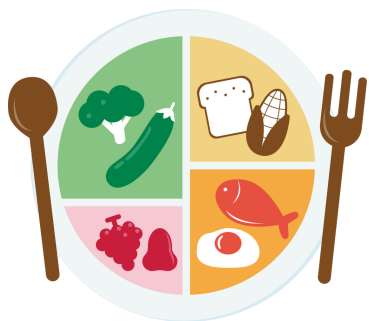
How To Treat SAD

- Exposure to sunlight. Whether it's going outside or sitting near a window, exposure to sunlight can help reduce symptoms.
- Light Therapy. If access to sunlight is not an option, certain light sources can provide a similar effect for a certain amount of time each day. Check with your healthcare provider for a recommendation.
- Psychotherapy. Cognitive behavioral or interpersonal therapy can help change the distorted views about yourself or the environment. It can also help improve your interpersonal relationship skills. It can also help you identify things that cause stress and help you learn how to manage and cope with them.
- Antidepressants. Jumping to medication is usually a last resort when it comes to SAD. Always talk to your doctor about what method of treatment they think is best. These medications can help balance the chemical imbalance in the brain that causes depression.



Prevention for SAD

While there is no exact cure or way to fully prevent developing SAD, there are steps you can take to manage symptoms and possibly prevent them from getting worse over time. By **eating healthy (5 food groups), getting enough vitamin D, and getting adequate sleep**, you may be able to ward off the symptoms for longer. Taking care of your body is essential for keeping your mind and body healthy and although, there is no way to fully prevent someone from developing Seasonal Affective Disorder, there are ways to help alleviate the symptoms and try to prevent them from taking over completely.



Sources: Johns Hopkins University & Mayo Clinic

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