

Depression – Seasonal Affective Disorder

Some people experience a serious mood change during the winter. This happens when there is less natural sunlight. This condition is called seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD is a type of depression. It often goes away during spring and summer. Some people's symptoms affect their quality of life. Six percent may be admitted to the hospital. SAD is more common in northern states.

Not everyone with SAD has the same symptoms. The symptoms may include feeling:

- Sad.
- Anxious.
- "Empty."
- Hopeless.
- Guilty.
- Worthless.
- Helpless.
- Irritable.
- Restless.

People may:

- Lose interest in activities.
- Lose energy.

They may have problems with:

- Concentrating.
- Remembering details.
- Making decisions.
- Sleeping.
- Oversleeping.
- Changes in weight.
- Thoughts of death or suicide.

SAD may be treated with light therapy. Nearly half the people with SAD do not respond to light therapy alone. It is important to speak to your doctor about how you feel. So you can get the right treatment plan.

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Here are a few tips to manage SAD. Be sure to talk to your doctor at any point about how you feel.

- Get enough sleep.
- Practice good sleep habits.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Exercise more often. Find activities that make you happy.
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.
- Talk with family and friends.
- Stay active.
- Talk about your feelings with someone you trust.
- Try to be around caring and positive people.
- Volunteer.
- Get involved in group activities.

Do you have SAD symptoms every year? Talk to a mental health care professional. There may be ways to prevent SAD. Start treatment during the fall or early winter. Do this before the symptoms begin.