

Seasonal Affective Disorder (S.A.D.)

What Is S. A. D.?

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons — SAD begins and ends at about the same times every year. If you're like most people with SAD, your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. Less often, SAD causes depression in the spring or early summer. Don't brush off that yearly feeling as simply a case of the "winter blues" or a seasonal funk that you have to tough out on your own. Take steps to keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year.

Fall and Winter Symptoms

In most cases, seasonal affective disorder symptoms appear during late fall or early winter and go away during the sunnier days of spring and summer. However, some people with the opposite pattern have symptoms that begin in spring or summer. In either case, symptoms may start out mild and become more severe as the season progresses. Symptoms specific to winter-onset SAD, sometimes called winter depression, may include:

- © Irritability, tiredness or low energy, problems getting along with other people, hypersensitivity to rejection, heavy, "leaden" feeling in the arms or legs, oversleeping, appetite changes, especially a craving for foods high in carbohydrates, weight gain

Risk Factors

Factors that may increase your risk of seasonal affective disorder include:

- © **Being female.** SAD is diagnosed more often in women than in men, but men may have more-severe symptoms.
- © **Age.** Young people have a higher risk of winter SAD, and winter SAD is less likely to occur in older adults.
- © **Family history.** People with SAD may be more likely to have blood relatives with SAD or another form of depression.
- © **Having clinical depression or bipolar disorder.** Symptoms of depression may worsen seasonally if you have one of these conditions.
- © **Living far from the equator.** SAD appears to be more common among people who live far north or south of the equator. This may be due to decreased sunlight during the winter and longer days during the summer months.

Lifestyle and Daily Remedies

In addition to your treatment plan for seasonal affective disorder, try the following:

- © **Make your environment sunnier and brighter.** Open blinds, trim tree branches that block sunlight or add skylights to your home. Sit closer to bright windows while at home or in the office.
- © **Get outside.** Take a long walk, eat lunch at a nearby park, or simply sit on a bench and soak up the sun. Even on cold or cloudy days, outdoor light can help — especially if you spend some time outside within two hours of getting up in the morning.
- © **Exercise regularly.** Exercise and other types of physical activity help relieve stress and anxiety, both of which can increase SAD symptoms. Being more fit can make you feel better about yourself, too, which can lift your mood.

WISHING YOU HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND SAFE TRAVELS!!!

For more information visit <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/basics/definition/con-20021047>