

Seasonal Affective Disease (SAD)

Winter Blues or Something Else?



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression where patients exhibit symptoms at approximately the same time each year.

SAD Sufferers:

-  Are mostly females, however, men with SAD exhibit more serious symptoms than women with SAD.
-  Are over the age of 20.
-  Symptoms start in the fall and may continue into the winter months. SAD commonly zaps energy and can make the individual feel moody. Reverse SAD can make the opposite occur, where depression may begin with the onset of Spring and Summer.
-  Treatment for SAD includes light therapy, psychotherapy and medications.
-  Addressing the problem can help you keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year.

SAD Symptoms:

- Depression
- Hopelessness
- Anxiety
- Loss of Energy
- Social Withdrawal
- Oversleeping
- Weight Gain
- Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Appetite changes, especially cravings for foods that are high in carbohydrates
- Difficulty concentrating and/or processing information

Reverse SAD:

-  In some people, Spring and Summer can bring on symptoms of Mania.
-  Reverse SAD is a form of bipolar disorder.

Reverse SAD Symptoms:

- Anxiety
- Trouble Sleeping (Insomnia)
- Agitation
- Weight Loss
- Poor Appetite
- Increased sex drive
- Persistently elevated mood
- Increased social activity
- Hyperactivity
- Unbridled enthusiasm out of proportion to the situation.

When To See A Doctor:

It is normal to feel down on some days, but if your down for days at a time, and don't get motivated to do activities you normally enjoy, it may be time to consult a doctor. This is particularly important if you notice that your sleep patterns and appetite have changed, you feel hopeless, think about suicide, or find yourself turning to alcohol for comfort/relaxation.

Tips To Reduce or Prevent SAD:

-  Eat a low fat diet that includes an adequate amount of protein
-  Reduce or eliminate foods high in sugars and carbohydrates as much as possible.
-  Talk to your doctor about taking vitamins that contain magnesium, vitamin-B complex, and minerals.
-  Reduce or eliminate caffeine (remember: caffeine is in most sodas, coffee, tea, and chocolate.)
-  Increase daily exercise, which will increase your dopamine and energy levels. Try including walking, jogging and/or aerobics.
-  If your case of SAD seems to be mild, try increasing the lighting in your home.