

Symptoms & Treatment of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) - Winter Depression

Treatment of Winter Depression:

Winter Depression is usually caused because of reduced exposure to sunlight in the winter. Here are ways to help yourself, if you believe you have Winter Depression:

1. Get more natural sunlight.

- A. Sit near windows whenever possible.
- B. Do not wear sunglasses.
- C. Take a regular mid-day walk.

Sunlight is a nutrient to our bodies. Trim the bushes around your windows and keep your curtains and blinds open. Use bright colors on walls and upholstery so the sunlight can be reflected within your home. Sit near windows at school, at work, on public transportation, and when dining out. In the winter do not wear sunglasses because they block the sun's rays from entering your eyes and being absorbed by the body. If you exercise indoors, work out near a window.

2. Exercise Regularly - Outdoors if possible.

People with SAD rarely exercise & often spend unusually little time outdoors in the winter. A Swiss study showed that a one-hour walk in midday winter sunlight can significantly lift the spirits. For winter blahs and winter doldrums, a daily outdoor winter walk may be all that's necessary.

3. Eat more proteins & less carbohydrates. Research has shown that proteins make you alert while carbohydrates make you sluggish and sleepy.

4. Take vitamin D supplementation 1000-4000 i.u. daily.

5. Take a vacation to a sunny destination. "With a diagnosis of SAD," Dr. Freeman says, "it might even be tax-deductible." See your accountant for tax details.

6. Form a Prayer team - Support Group. One of my colleagues has trouble with winter depression. She said last winter she and other women formed a prayer team and she noticed significantly less Winter Depression.

7. Seek out other support groups. Contact the local hospitals and mental health centers they have schedules of support group meetings. Neal Owens and other SAD sufferers founded a nationwide support group, NOSAD, to help people with winter blues -- and their families -- cope with the condition. Write for free information: P.O. Box 40133, Washington, D.C. 20016. web: www.nosad.org

8. Try bright-light therapy. You can buy special light therapy boxes. A light therapy box puts out about 10,000 lux which is equivalent to six 100 watt light bulbs. Bright-light therapy is effective with most as noted in a great deal of

research. The light must enter the eyes, you should not look directly at bright-light appliances. Simply sit near them. Several companies now make bright-light boxes, among them: The SunBox Company (address, phone number, and website below), and Apollo Light Systems, 352 West 1060 South, Orem, UT 84058, 1-800-545-9667, www.apollolight.com. You can also check out full-spectrum lighting and other lighting products online at Ott BioLightSystems: www.ottbiolight.com.

Symptoms of Winter Depression:

Having at least four of these symptoms, for more than two consecutive weeks, during the period from October to March, may indicate Winter Depression. Symptoms vary from person to person but these are the most common.

- Needing more sleep - maybe oversleeping, or being sleepy all day for several days.
- Increase in appetite - Often craving sweet or starchy foods.
- Weight gain
- Fatigue - A drop in energy level
- Decrease in productivity
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability
- Avoidance of social situations - Wanting to stay home more than usual.
- Difficulty coping - Life situations that are usually not excessively stressful become overwhelming.

9. Try a dawn simulator. These devices can be set like alarm clocks to produce an artificial dawn from one minute to three hours before the user awakens. They use dimmer technology to slowly raise the amount of light in the users bedroom. Neal Owens' pocket-size SunUp costs about \$200. Write The SunBox Company, 19127 Orbit Dr., Gaithersburg, MD 20879, or visit their website at www.sunboxco.com.

10. Find a good counselor. A good counselor can help you figure out what you can do to help yourself get out of the winter depression.

11. Consider medication with a Psychiatrist. There are some antidepressants that help Winter Depression.