



Healthy Living Series

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a disorder that is typically experienced in the fall and winter, making you feel bad when the weather changes and daylight lessens. Let's take a look at some of the signs, symptoms, and treatments.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Increased (rather than decreased) sleep
- Increased (rather than decreased) appetite with carbohydrate craving
- A marked increase in weight
- Irritability
- Interpersonal difficulties (especially rejection sensitivity)
- Lead paralysis (heavy, leaden feeling in arms and legs)
- The likelihood increases the further one goes North
- Women are four times more likely to experience SAD.
- It's unclear if this problem is due to serotonin, melatonin, or other hormones and their effect on the body's circadian rhythms.



WALKING AWAY FROM S.A.D.

- Most treatment plans include physical activity. In most cases, exercise may help to manage or even prevent SAD.
- How? Exercise stimulates the brain to release hormones called endorphins, which produce a sense of feeling good. Endorphin production usually begins 15 to 20 minutes into an exercise session and peaks after 45 minutes.
- Studies show that even moderate exercise can erase depression symptoms for 2+ hours.
- The most recommended form of exercise for depression and SAD is whatever you will continue doing. For many, it is simply walking.

OTHER WAYS OF TREATING

- Prioritize your mental health (take time for yourself, practice deep breathing, keep a diary, etc).
- Try to get outdoors in the sun for 30+ minutes every day. When that's not possible, consider purchasing a "light therapy" device.
- Eat a diet high in fruits/vegetables packed with vitamins and minerals.
- Maintain a similar sleep routine (aim for at least 7 hours each night).
- Manage your stress the best you can.
- See family and friends – the power of social connection cannot be overestimated.