

Medications

Antidepressant medications can be used to treat SAD, but are usually prescribed along with light therapy. When light therapy is only partially successful, medication may enhance the light's effect. Use of light therapy in conjunction with medication may make it possible to take smaller doses of medication and to reduce medication side effects. In addition, taking medication reduces the time spent in front of lights.

Lifestyle Changes

If you have been diagnosed with SAD, you can make the following lifestyle changes to help your condition:

- Increase the amount of light in your home. Add lamps or skylights. Trim tree branches that block sunlight.
- Walk outdoors on sunny days.
- Exercise regularly.
- Learn ways to manage stress.
- Experiment with sleeping less and eating fewer carbohydrates.

Resources

Treatment and Information Community Mental Health Centers

MISSOURI

Comprehensive Mental Health Services, Inc.
10901 Winner Road
Independence, MO 64052
816-254-3652
www.thecmhs.com

ReDiscover

901 NE Independence
Lee's Summit, MO 64086
816-246-8000

TMC Behavioral Health

300 W. 19th Terrace
Kansas City, MO 64108
816-467-1400
www.trumed.org

Swope Health Services

3801 Blue Parkway
Kansas City, MO 64130
816-923-5800
www.swopeparkway.org

Tri County Mental Health Services

3100 NE 83rd Street
Kansas City, MO 64119
816-468-0400

KANSAS

Johnson County Mental Health Center
6000 Lamar, Suite 130
Mission, KS 66202
913-831-2550
<http://mentalhealth.jocogov.org>

Wyandot Centers

3615 Eaton Street
Kansas City, KS 66103
913-831-9500
www.kumc.edu/wmhc

Mental Health America of the Heartland

739 Minnesota Ave.
Kansas City, KS 66101
913-281-2221
HelpLine 913-281-1234

Seasonal Affective Disorder



Seasonal Affective Disorder

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as SAD, is a mood disorder where people suffer from symptoms of depression during the winter months, with symptoms subsiding during the spring and summer months.

SAD should not be confused with "holiday blues" or "Christmas depression". Unlike these episodes of sadness, SAD has a physiological basis. For people who suffer from SAD, there is a greater sensitivity to the lack of light in winter months.

Did you know?

- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is commonly called the "winter blues" or "winter depression."
- Over 10 million people or six percent of Americans suffer from SAD every year.
- SAD accounts for about one in three cases of depression.
- Four times as many women as men are affected by SAD.
- SAD usually starts between the ages of 20 and 40, but has been diagnosed in children and adolescents.
- There are indications that SAD is

inherited, so sufferers have a genetic vulnerability.

- SAD is often misdiagnosed or not diagnosed at all.
- January and February are the most difficult months for people with SAD.
- Effects of SAD can be catastrophic and severely disrupt education, career and/or relationships.

How is SAD treated?

As with any mood disorder, treatment of SAD should be under the guidance of a qualified health professional. Treatments that might be suggested include:

Light therapy

Light therapy is the primary treatment for SAD. Scientists believe that light entering through the eye can correct abnormalities in the brain resulting from a lack of light. Light therapy involves exposure under specified conditions to light that is five to 20 times brighter than regular indoor lighting. The length of time and intensity of the light depends on the individual and the equipment used. Ongoing supervision of treatment should be provided by a health care professional. Although light therapy is safe for most people, it can cause eyestrain, headaches, insomnia, and feelings of restlessness or irritability.

Warning Signs

Many people do not realize that they have SAD or that it is a treatable disorder. The key indicator for SAD is seasonality. Symptoms are persistent, but tend to come and go year after year at approximately the same time. Usually, symptoms will appear in the fall and will continue until the spring. Diagnosis for SAD requires that a person has experienced symptoms in at least two consecutive winters, followed by non-depressed periods in the spring or summer. Also, there must be no other explanation for changes in mood and behavior.

Warning signs and symptoms of SAD include:

- Depression
- Change in sleep patterns (especially increased sleep)
- Increase in appetite (especially for foods high in carbohydrates)
- Weight gain
- Loss of energy
- Loss of interest in sex
- Decreased concentration
- Inability to complete tasks
- Decreased creativity
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Avoidance of social situations