

Feeling a bit SAD?



The thought of warm jumpers and mulled wine doesn't bring a smile to everyone's face. In fact, for an estimated one in 20 of us, shorter days and the lack of sun can spark the onset of Seasonal Affective Disorder. Heather Tucker finds out more.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) also sometimes known as winter depression, is not a unique disorder in itself but instead falls under the subtype of Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). "It is a debilitating depressed mood that prevents normal functioning: getting out of bed, performing self-care, doing work. Even events that were fun in the past cannot be enjoyed for someone with MDD," says Dr. Elizabeth Lombardo of the US-based Mind-Body Wellness.

Symptoms can include changes in appetite, fatigue, irritability, difficulties concentrating and feelings of anxiety and/or despair. The exact cause is still unknown, however, it is thought to be related to the fact that in the autumn and winter we carry on working well into the dark, which is exactly when our internal clock

thinks we should be sleeping.

However, not everyone who does not want to get out of bed because of the cold and dark is suffering from SAD. While there is a lot of talk about SAD, what many people with milder symptoms are more likely experiencing is

the seasonal or winter blues.

Did You Know?

Cultural differences can make diagnosing SAD more difficult, as symptoms such as 'comfort eating' can also be associated with the winter months.

— Debra Taylor-McGee, Psychologist

As Beverly Beuermann-King, a stress and wellness specialist in Canada explains, "winter blues differ from SAD in that the symptoms do not last as long and do not interfere significantly with everyday living."

Beating the blues

Neither SAD nor the winter blues is a condition that should be ignored. Research

has shown there are many techniques and treatment options, which when applied, help reduce symptoms and make those cold dark winter days a bit more bearable.

If you are feeling the more severe symptoms associated with

SAD, then a good place to start is by speaking to your health care professional. They should be able to talk to you about the options of medication, cognitive behavioural therapy, light therapy or other treatments.

You can also take a look at www.lumie.com, which provides a range of dawn simulator body clocks, light therapy lamps, and accessories. Those suffering

from SAD symptoms or the winter blues may find the extra boost of light can make a real difference in the darker months.

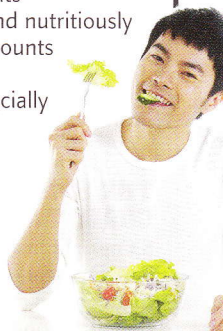
SAD fact

SAD is most prevalent in regions that have long winters, short days, and cold temperatures. It is rare in people living in regions within 30 degrees of the equator.

— Jonathan Alpert, Psychotherapist

Try some of Beverly Beuermann-King's suggestions:

- Spend more time outdoors during the day - at least 20 minutes twice a day. It doesn't matter if it is a glorious winter morning or a dreary cloudy afternoon
- Arrange your indoor environment so that it receives more natural light. Move your furniture so that you sit near a window
- Install full spectrum lightbulbs to lamps and lights
- Eat regularly and nutritiously
- Get regular amounts of sleep
- Exercise - especially if it takes you outdoors
- Deal with stressful situations
- Take a sunny southern vacation.



For more information on things you can do to treat SAD and Winter Blues symptoms or how to support friends and family with the condition, visit our website: www.xmonline.nl.