



Avoiding Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Feeling low during certain times of the year? You're not alone.

The shorter days and colder weather of winter can often leave you feeling less energized or a bit down. If you start to feel the “winter blues” setting in, a few quick fixes can help you snap back into the swing of things.

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern—most commonly beginning in fall or winter when daylight hours decrease and improving in spring and summer. SAD may be linked to reduced exposure to sunlight, changes in serotonin level, disruption to your circadian rhythm and changes in melatonin level.

Common signs and symptoms of SAD

- Persistent sadness or low mood
- Fatigue or low energy
- Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Difficulty concentrating
- Changes in sleep
- Increased appetite or cravings
- Feelings of hopelessness or irritability

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It's important to notice and manage symptoms early on. Being mindful of the things that tend to trigger depressive moods is one way to get ahead of them. Plus, being patient with yourself when you experience a trigger may help reduce its overall impact. Some ways to manage SAD symptoms include:

- Getting outside during daylight hours.
- Trying light therapy.
- Engaging in regular physical activity.
- Seeking help from a licensed professional.
- Staying socially connected.
- Eating consistent balanced meals.
- Avoiding alcohol and other substances.
- Making time for yourself.
- Managing your levels of stress.

Additional support

If you have symptoms such as anxiety, loss of energy, social withdrawal, loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed or feeling down for days at a time, you might be experiencing something more than SAD and should see your doctor. They can determine if you are dealing with depression and can provide advice on how you can start feeling better. Depression is challenging, but you're never alone. Reaching out and seeking help is one of the best ways to lighten the mental load of SAD.



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