



December is Seasonal Depression Awareness Month



What is Seasonal Depression Awareness Month?

[Seasonal Affective Disorder](#), or SAD, is more than just those winter blues or a seasonal “funk.” SAD is a type of depression with symptoms that typically come and go with the seasons, starting in the late fall and early winter and going away during the spring and summer. SAD is a very real type of depression and symptoms may include:

- **Social Withdrawal.** People with SAD typically prefer to be alone: They avoid friends and family and don't participate in social activities they normally enjoy.
- **Physical Discomfort.** Headaches can become a problem.
- **Fatigue and Oversleeping.** People with SAD feel exhausted even though they may be sleeping a lot more than normal.
- **Irritability and Anxiety.** Small problems can create or cause intense feelings of nervousness, unease, or worry. It can be hard to concentrate.

Tips to Manage Seasonal Affective Disorder

- ▶ **Structure.** Go to bed at a regular time, and get enough rest. Give focus to eating healthy meals on a regular schedule.
- ▶ **Make your environment brighter when you can.** Experience as much daylight as possible by opening blinds and sitting closer to bright windows.
- ▶ **Get outside.** Go for a walk, take your lunch outside, take short breaks throughout your day and enjoy the sunshine.
- ▶ **Socialize.** Connecting with your friends and family is a great way to lift your spirits and avoid social isolation.
- ▶ **Exercise.** A regular exercise routine can help with stress relief, and being more fit can help to increase self esteem. Plus, exercise increases levels in your brain of the same chemicals used in anti-depressant medications.
- ▶ **Seek professional help.** We all have tough days and times when life presents us with an increase in overall stress. It's ok to have a bad day. However, SAD is a type of depression, and if your symptoms do not improve, or even worsen, it may be time to seek professional support. Treatment options can include psychotherapy, medications, and even light box therapy. Your primary care provider can be an important resource, providing initial mental health screenings and referrals to mental health specialists.

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To learn more about Seasonal Affective Disorder and where you can get help finding treatment, please visit the [National Institute of Mental Health website](#).



[Your Living Resources Program](#) is available to support you 24/7 and has a vast library of articles, slideshows, and quizzes to help you learn more about Seasonal Affective Disorder and how you can manage it.