



SAD

Seasonal Affective Disorder



“Winter
Blues”
Have
You
Feeling
Down?

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?



As the winter approaches and the days get shorter, some people experience a form of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

SAD is an extreme case of the “winter blues” that is relieved during the spring and summer months.

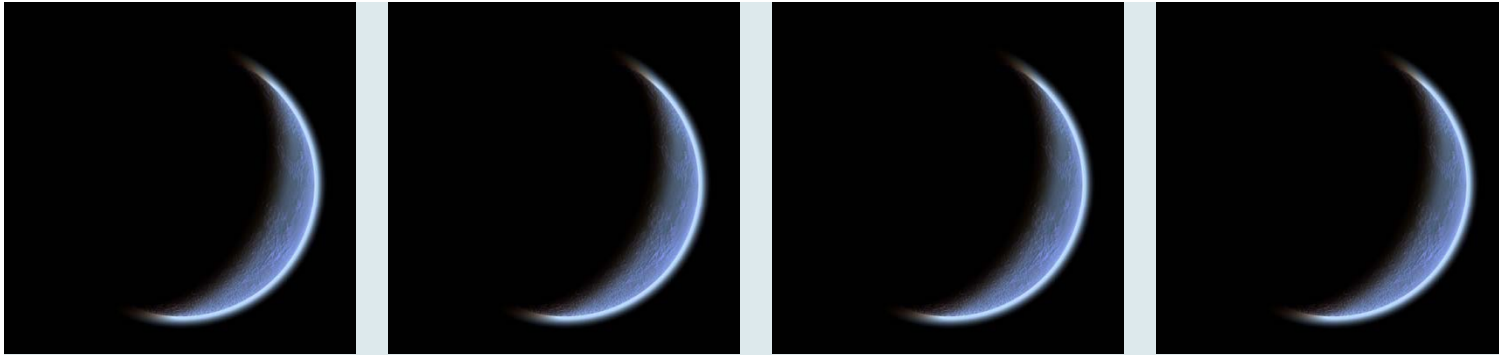
Seasonal Affective Disorder



Although Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) isn't completely understood, it is a real illness with sometimes severe symptoms.

As seasons change, there is a shift in our "biological internal clocks" or circadian rhythms, partly in response to the changes in sunlight patterns. This can cause our biological clocks to fall out of step with our daily schedules.

For people with SAD, their bodies have a difficult time adjusting to the shortage of sunlight in the winter months.



Who Gets Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

Young people and women are at the highest risk for the disorder, but it can affect anyone. In fact, an estimated 25% percent of the population suffers from mild winter SAD, and about 5% suffer from a more severe form of the disorder.

What causes SAD?

Melatonin, a sleep-related hormone secreted by the pineal gland in the brain, has been linked to SAD. This hormone is believed to cause symptoms of depression and is produced at increased levels in the dark. When the days are shorter and darker, the production of this hormone increases.

Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Increased sadness
- Increased appetite, including craving of carbohydrates
- Higher irritability
- Increased anxiety
- Increased weight
- Increased sleep, lower quality rest
- Lack of energy
- Problems concentrating
- Social and interpersonal strain
- Menstrual difficulties



Treatment for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

There is no need to wait for the spring months to overcome SAD!

Try taking the following steps to treat your case of “winter blues”

- Spending time outdoors during the day
- Arranging homes and workplaces to receive more sunlight
- Regular exercise, particularly if done outdoors
- Eating meals that have limited amounts of processed food and increasing intake of fruits and vegetables.
- Light therapy has been shown to suppress the brain's secretion of melatonin. Individuals sit in front of the light box for a few minutes everyday while they read or do other activities.
- Depending on how severely a person is affected the use of antidepressant medications might be helpful.

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Health Services

If you think you may have SAD, make an appointment with a *Physician* or *Nurse Practitioner* at Health Services by calling (603) 862-1806.

Light Therapy is available for free to all UNH students, faculty and staff by calling (603) 862-3823 or visiting Health Services, Room 249.

Counseling Center

You may also want to make an appointment with a *Psychologist* at the Counseling Center by calling (603) 862-2090.

Light Therapy at Health Services

For Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)



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faculty and staff.

Appointments/Information:

(603) 862-3823 | Health Services, Room 249
www.unh.edu/health-services

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Additional Resources

Book:

- *Winter Blues: Banishing the Blues of Seasonal Affective Disorder*, Rosenthal, N.E. (1998). Available for check-out in the Health Services Resource Library, 2nd Floor

Web Sites:

- UNH Health Services, www.unh.edu/health-services
- Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research, www.mayoclinic.com
- Psychology Information Online, www.psychologyinfo.com/depression/sad.htm