

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): More Than the Winter Blues



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What is seasonal affective disorder?

Many people go through short periods of time where they feel sad or not like their usual selves. Sometimes, these mood changes begin and end when the seasons change. People may start to feel “down” when the days get shorter in the fall and winter (also called “winter blues”) and begin to feel better in the spring, with longer daylight hours.

In some cases, these mood changes are more serious and can affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities. If you have noticed significant changes in your mood and behavior whenever the seasons change, you may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD), a type of depression.

In most cases, SAD symptoms start in the late fall or early winter and go away during the spring and summer; this is known as winter-pattern SAD or winter depression. Some people may experience depressive episodes during the spring and summer months; this is called summer-pattern SAD or summer depression and is less common.

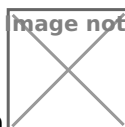
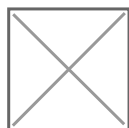


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SAD Resources and More Information

► Read article about Seasonal Affective Disorder [here](#)



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD): More Than the Winter Blues

As the days get shorter and there is less daylight, you may start to feel sad. While many people experience the “winter blues,” some people may have a type of depression called seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

The first step is to determine how much your symptoms interfere with your daily life.

Do you have mild symptoms that have lasted less than 2 weeks?



- Feeling down but still able to take care of yourself and others
- Having some trouble sleeping
- Having less energy than usual but still able to do your job, schoolwork, or housework

These activities can make you feel better:



- Doing something you enjoy
- Going outside in the sunlight
- Spending time with family and friends
- Eating healthy and avoiding foods with lots of sugar

If these activities do not help or your symptoms are getting worse, talk to a health care provider.

Do you have more severe symptoms that have lasted more than 2 weeks?



- Social withdrawal
- Oversleeping
- Gaining weight
- Craving foods with lots of sugar like cakes, candies, and cookies

Seek professional help:



- Light therapy
- Psychotherapy (talk therapy)
- Medications
- Vitamin D supplements

For help finding treatment, visit nimh.nih.gov/findhelp.

If you or someone you know is in immediate distress or is thinking about hurting themselves, call or text the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988** or chat at **988lifeline.org**.



National Institute
of Mental Health

nimh.nih.gov/sad

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