



Know The Signs



Hello!

This week I thought it would be fitting to discuss Seasonal Affective Disorder, also known as S.A.D. This condition is much like depression, but seasonal changes influence it. Most commonly this is an issue for people in the winter months, but a small percentage of people do have symptoms when seasons change in the spring and summertime. SAD often affects people who are living in northern regions and experience less sunlight in the winter. An additional factor to consider is that SAD is more likely to occur in females than males. There has not been a proven cause of SAD, but it is thought to be connected to the levels of serotonin decreasing during the winter months.

It is important to understand that there is a difference between having the “Winter Blues” and having an actual condition. Traditionally SAD begins and ends around the same time each year for those who struggle with it. This means that if you have identified a cycle in yourself or others you can prepare for it before it takes effect. Let's look into what the symptoms and treatments are for this common condition.

Physical Signs

- Having low energy and feeling sluggish
- Having problems with sleeping too much
- Experiencing carbohydrate cravings, overeating, and weight gain

Cognitive Signs

- Feeling listless, sad, or down most of the day, nearly every day
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless, worthless, or guilty
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Having thoughts of not wanting to live

Check Out This Video



Winter vs Summer SAD

Winter-pattern SAD:

- Oversleeping (hypersomnia)
- Overeating, particularly with a craving for carbohydrates
- Weight gain
- Social withdrawal (feeling like “hibernating”)

Summer-pattern SAD:

- Trouble sleeping (insomnia)
- Poor appetite, leading to weight loss
- Restlessness and agitation
- Anxiety
- Episodes of violent behavior

Steps You Can Take to Treat and Prevent SAD

The cycles of Seasonal Affective Disorder can be very predictable, and therefore can be caught before they take effect. Preventative actions that can be taken before winter (or sometimes summer) months can include the following.

Light Therapy

- There are special lamps that help produce a similar effect as sunlight that can be used to help alleviate symptoms of SAD.
- Another way to do this is by simply going outside more often. I know this one can be tricky here in Wisconsin, but taking even an extra 5 minutes outside can help improve mood regulation.

Take in extra vitamin D

- This could be through changes in diet and eating vitamin-rich foods, or even supplementing with vitamins.

Talk Therapy

- Talk therapy can be helpful to challenge negative thinking patterns that are associated with SAD.

Talk to your doctor

- If symptoms persist and are not manageable, please seek help from your healthcare providers.

My seasonal depression when it sees the sun go down at 5:30 pm



Want to know more? Check out these resources.

- [Crisis Lifeline](#)
- [NIMH](#)



Contact Your Mental Health Navigator:

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