

BATTLING THE

WINTER BLUES



The Winter Blues and SAD can be a common problem in more northern countries, where office bound workers rarely benefit from natural light

WINTER BLUES



The Winter Blues are more common, with many people experiencing a noticeable mood shift during the colder, darker days of winter.



You may find yourself feeling more lethargic and low-spirited.



Although you may feel more gloomy than usual, the Winter Blues typically do not hinder your ability to enjoy life.

SAD

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a form of Mood Disorder in which depressive episodes occur seasonally



SAD differs from 'winter blues' in that episodes are longer, they interfere with everyday life, and they reoccur during the same period year after year.



Winter-onset SAD typically begins in the late fall or winter, and may not go away until the spring time or early summer.



Seasonal depressive episodes must outnumber non-seasonal depressive episodes.



OCCURRENCE



More than half of respondents said the winter weather negatively impacts their mood.



15% of people will experience a mild form of SAD that leaves them slightly depressed, but still able to live their life without major disruptions.



About 2 to 3% of Canadians will experience SAD in their lifetime.



Seasonal Affective Disorder makes up about 10% of all Mood Disorders.



Average age of onset is 18-30, but can impact people of any age.

LATITUDE

"A CHANGE IN LATITUDE, BRINGS A CHANGE IN ATTITUDE"



The primary culprit of both the Winter Blues and SAD seems to be the lower level of natural sunlight we are exposed to in the fall and winter. Less natural light impacts:



SEROTONIN
Dips in serotonin, a neurotransmitter that regulates mood and behaviour



CIRCADIAN RHYTHMS
Disruptions in circadian rhythms (your body's internal clock), which help control sleep-wake cycles



MELATONIN
Alterations in melatonin, a hormone associated with both mood and sleep

SYMPTOMS

	WINTER BLUES	SAD
Fatigue that is often incapacitating	✓	✓
Difficulty concentrating or remembering	✓	✓
Isolation - not wanting to be around others	✓	✓
Over-eating and craving carbohydrates	✓	✓
Lethargy, disturbed sleep, narcoleptic symptoms	✓	✓
Negative thoughts and guilt	✓	✓
Low mood almost every day	✗	✓
Hopeless about the future	✗	✓
Suicidal thoughts	✗	✓

MEN VS WOMEN

SAD



STRATEGIES

	WB	SAD
OUTSIDE Go outside as often as possible. Taking a quick walk around the block can provide a much-needed dose of sunlight and Vitamin D. Sunlight has a positive impact on our hormones and neurotransmitters.	✓	✓
EMBRACE THE POWER OF THE SUNRISE Resist the urge to hibernate and make the most of what daylight is available to you. A sunrise alarm is a gentle option that could make crawling out of bed less terrible. Instead of a blaring tone, it wakes you naturally with a light that increases gradually for around 30 minutes.	✓	✓
INSTALL DAYTIME LIGHT BULBS Users claim that full spectrum light bulbs improve mood, lower the frequency of headaches, and decrease fatigue. At work, they have been shown to increase productivity and provide a better working atmosphere.	✓	✓
EXERCISE Exercise stimulates the production of antidepressant compounds that can help to fight the winter blues.	✓	✓
REDUCE STRESS Learn techniques to manage your stress better. Unmanaged stress can lead to overeating, or other unhealthy thoughts and behaviors.	✓	✓
STICK TO A SCHEDULE People who live with the Winter Blues and SAD often have trouble sleeping at night and getting up in the morning. Maintaining a regular schedule improves sleep. Eating at regular intervals can help with diet and not over-eating.	✓	✓
MOOD BOOSTER FOODS Growing research in what you eat can simply making boost mood and improve symptoms of anxiety and depression. Look for known mood boosters such as salmon, blueberries, leafy greens, oysters, green tea, or chocolate.	✓	✓
VITAMIN D Low levels of Vitamin D have been linked to Winter Blues and SAD, so ensure that you are getting enough in your diet or ask your doctor about a supplement.	✓	✓
AROMATHERAPY Essential oils can influence areas of the brain that are responsible for controlling mood and your internal body clock that influence sleep and appetite.	✓	✓
WINTER VACATION A mid-winter trip to a warm, sunny location may provide the boost needed to get through the rest of the dreary months.	✓	✓
TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR/ PSYCHOTHERAPY If you think you have seasonal depression, it's important to see a doctor first to rule out other explanations for your symptoms.	✗	✓
LIGHT THERAPY Light therapy can help in the prevention and recovery of SAD and involves using a special lamp that can deliver a sufficiently bright light to treat depression (5,000 to 10,000 lux of light). Treatment requires sitting near a light box for 30-60 minutes a day, most often in the mornings while you read, work on the computer, or eat breakfast. Significant improvement can often be seen within days.	✗	✓
MEDICATION Antidepressant medications may be used to treat people with more severe cases of SAD.	✗	✓
RELOCATION In extreme cases of SAD, you may need to consider moving to a southern climate where there is more sun and longer hours of daylight.	✗	✓

RECOGNIZING AND RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOURS DRIVEN BY SAD

