

A Cure for the Winter Doldrums



Many people start to feel depressed in November and continue to feel as dark and dreary as the weather until the spring thaw. Scientists call severe depression that sets in during winter Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Light and temperature play a significant role in SAD. Daylight prompts the brain to release chemicals that spark feelings of energy. For about 5 percent of the population, their mood grows darker when days grow shorter. Daily exposure to full-spectrum fluorescent light, which resembles sunlight, can help cure SAD.

Other tips for overcoming SAD include:

- Get outside as much as possible. SAD sufferers report they benefit more by exposure to early morning light than to light later in the day.
- Keep the drapes in your house open and the window shades raised during daylight hours.
- Sit near windows and gaze outside periodically.
- On cloudy days, turn on bright lights.
- Don't isolate yourself during winter. Visit friends, go to museums, see shows—anything to get out and about.
- Try to take your vacation in the winter instead of in the summer.