



# Feeling SAD?

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs at a specific time of the year. It can be either winter or summer pattern depression, though winter pattern depression is more common.

SAD is different from the experience of what many people call the “winter blues.” It’s fairly common for people to go through periods of time when they feel sad or have low energy, especially during the short days of winter.

Someone with depression or SAD experiences significant symptoms that often interfere with their daily life. Instead of a day here or there of low energy or feeling “blah,” someone with SAD might feel depressed almost every day and may struggle to function.

Any type of depression is a serious mental health condition that should be treated by a trained medical professional. If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms, get in touch with your doctor right away.



## SYMPTOMS

- Feeling sad or depressed most days
- Fatigue and lethargy
- Irritability and mood changes
- Loss of interest in regular activities
- Oversleeping
- Weight gain
- Overeating, especially high carbohydrate foods
- Social withdrawal
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Thoughts of death or suicide

## SAD VS. MAJOR DEPRESSION

What makes SAD unique from major depression is its cyclical nature. Instead of experiencing depression year-round, SAD comes and goes with the seasons.

Someone who suffers from SAD may experience many of the same symptoms of depression, but they usually last only about four or five months of the year. In the case of winter pattern depression, symptoms typically develop in late fall and improve in the spring.

## TREATMENTS

Your doctor may recommend:

- **Light therapy:** Exposure to bright light can help with symptoms by stimulating certain brain neurotransmitters which impact mood.
- **Medication:** Many anti-depressants are effective in treating SAD.
- **Vitamin D:** A low level of vitamin D is common in people with SAD. Taking a vitamin D supplement may be recommended.
- **Talk therapy:** Trained psychotherapists help people cope with depression.

## SEEKING HELP

SAD is more than an annoyance that happens every winter. It is a mental health condition for which there are helpful treatments. Working with a skilled team of medical and mental health professionals can make all the difference.

If you or a loved one are experiencing any form of depression, there are people to help. Call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) if you are in crisis or need support.



NATIONAL  
HELPLINE

1-800-662-HELP (4357)

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Treatment referral and information service

SAMHSA