

Seasonal Affective Disorder



ISADI

Tips for keeping active in the winter

- I. Go for walks during your lunch or before work while there is still light.
- II. Go straight from your work to the gym. Try not to get stopped by that pasta dinner and comfy couch!
- III. Start a winter sport like cross-country skiing, snowboarding or skating.
- IV. Create a favorite at-home activity for when the weather isn't great. Keep your favorite work out DVD on hand.



Some Extra Advice

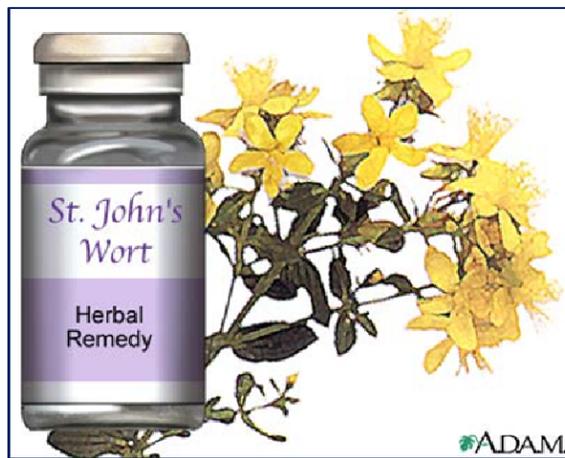
Stay connected! We know that most animals hibernate in the winter and wait for the spring months. Don't make your home your den. Keep up interactions with friends and family. The lack of sunshine can get you down but be sure to get out and interact with loved ones! Our social connections help us deal with stress, the blues and feelings of loneliness. While the sunlight may be sparse don't let that be the winter motto for your friends as well.



Medication

After consulting with your doctor the option of antidepressants - SSRI's (Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors) may be a viable option. St. John's Wort can be an effective natural antidepressant. Also the use of supplements such as cod liver oil to increase your vitamin D may be helpful. As sunlight decreases during the winter months it's important to replenish your vitamin D reserves. Consult with your doctor prior to any supplementation!

Source: Rebecca Armstrong. The Independent. "How to beat the Winter blues" 2007



Treating SAD with Sleep, Light, and Medication

Regulating Sleep

In order to get the most sunshine out of your day it's important to make the effort to be up during the sunlight hours. Setting a regular sleep schedule is important so you don't oversleep. According to Gannet Health Services, "Oversleeping and fluctuations in a sleep-wake schedule causes increase in levels of melatonin during sleep, which can contribute to feelings of depression."

How light can help

A light box is a small rectangular box that contains light bulbs with intensities between 2 500 and 10 000 lux (compared to the regular 250 to 500 lux in an ordinary light bulb). This high intensity light mimics the sun's natural rays and will contribute to combating the low levels of light received in the winter months. Using the light box daily between 30 minutes and 2 hours will help.

Source: Rebecca Armstrong, The Independent, 2007

Banana- Berry Wake-Up Shake



Makes about 3 1/4 cups (800mL) - Serves - 2

- 1 banana
- 1 cup fresh or frozen berries (any combination)
- 1 cup milk or vanilla-flavoured soy beverage
- 3/4 cup lower-fat yogurt (vanilla or other flavour)

In a blender liquefy fruit with a small amount of the milk. Add remaining milk and yogurt; blend until smooth. If shake is too thick, add extra milk or soy beverage to achieve desired consistency.

MOST IMPORTANTLY, GET OUTSIDE!

While our time in the winter sunshine may be limited it's important to make every effort to get outside whenever possible. If you are stuck in an office during the sunny hours try and sit by a window and look outside. Every bit of sunshine helps fight off the symptoms of SAD.

MAKE AHEAD - Make these shakes the night before and you'll be ready for a quick morning meal to go.

TIP - This protein rich shake will help to maintain blood sugar levels and counteract cravings for sweets.

TIP - The vanilla yogurt used in these shake recipes is higher in carbohydrate than most other yogurts. People with diabetes may want to choose a lower carbohydrate brand.

TIP - Frozen sliced bananas work well in these shakes and help make them creamy. When bananas start to get brown, pop them in the freezer and take out as needed.

This protein rich shake will help to maintain blood sugar levels and counteract cravings for sweets.

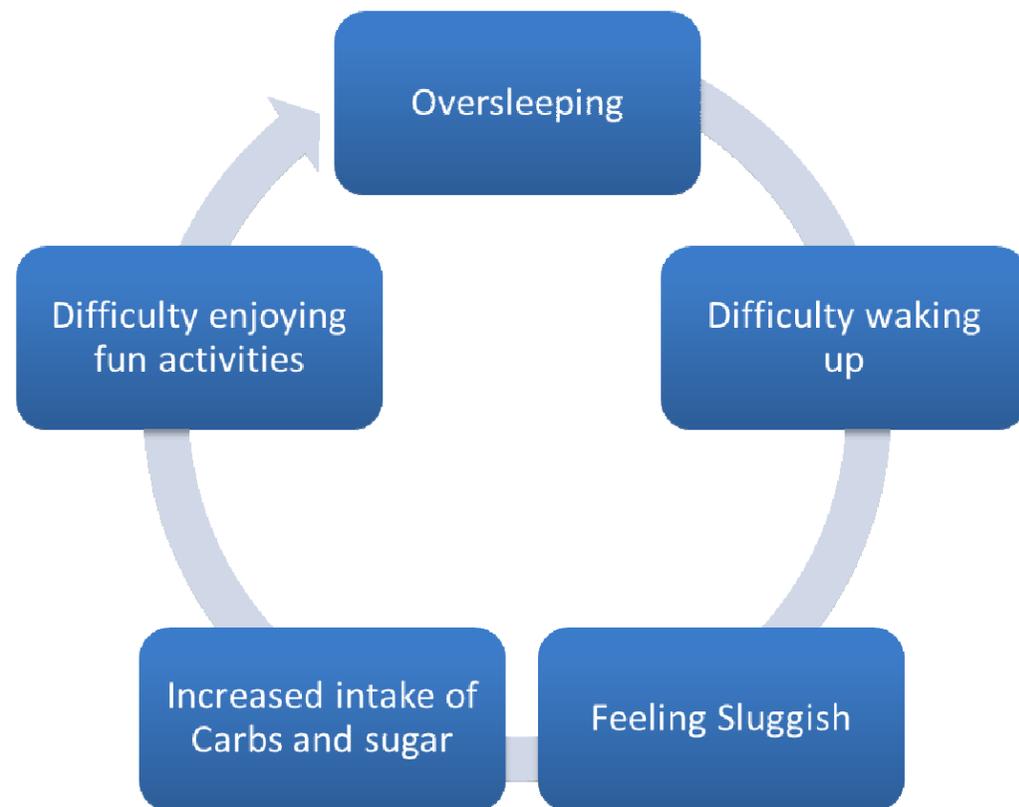
Source: Dietitians of Canada - "Great Food Fast" - published by Robert Rose Inc.

What is

Seasonal Affective Disorder

SAD is a mild to moderate form of depression that comes on as the summer changes into the fall and winter seasons. SAD is a cyclical depression where the feelings of “winter blues” come back each winter season.

Symptoms



Source: Giorgio Piccoli, 2007. *Beating the Winter Blues: A practical guide on how to get through the winter at Cornell*

What are the Causes?

There is not a single known cause for SAD. More likely than not it's a combination of age, gender, heredity and your body's natural chemical makeup. Here are three contributors to SAD:

1. **Circadian Rhythm** – is your body's internal clock. Some researchers believe that during the shorter days of the winter months your internal clock is thrown off and your body has trouble regulating when to sleep and be awake.
2. **Melatonin** – a sleep related hormone that increases during the dark months. This increase may lead to depression.
3. **Serotonin** – a “feel good” neurotransmitter in the brain. A drop in sunlight can lead to a drop in Serotonin as well.

Source: Mayo Clinic Staff. *Seasonal Affective Disorder*. September 24th, 2007.

Risk Factors

Women are more likely than men to be affected by SAD. There is also a slight heredity factor to SAD. So if your immediate family is affected your chances of being affected by SAD are also increased. Lastly, living in the more northern latitudes and the further away from the equator you live, the higher your risk of being affected by SAD.

Source: CMHA October 10, 2007. Are Dark Days Getting You Down?



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