

Tip Sheet: Understanding Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of recurrent depression with a seasonal pattern that is most common in the winter months when shorter days and colder temperatures force many people inside, away from natural sunlight. Known professionally as “Major Depressive Disorder, with Seasonal Pattern,” this condition, or its milder form, commonly known as the “Winter Blues,” is estimated to impact nearly 15 million Americans every year, with the highest rates in the northern-most parts of the country.

Tips for beating the Winter Blues Depression is a serious mental health concern.

While talking with a mental health professional is the best way to assist you in developing a treatment plan to address any type of depression, including Seasonal Affective Disorder, there are a number of simple but effective things everyone can do to prevent Seasonal Affective Disorder, or just help with a temporary case of the “Winter Blues.”

Be Active. In addition to improving your overall health and fitness and reducing your risk for many chronic diseases, studies show that regular exercise can also help improve mood. Schedule time for exercise. Healthy adults should aim for 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (e.g., brisk walking) per week.

Eat Healthy. Avoid sugary, processed foods and snacks. Instead, reach for fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes and whole grain foods with a low glycemic index for sustained energy.

Find Sun. Whenever possible, try to spend some time in natural sunlight. Experts suggest that going for a 20-minute walk early in the morning when natural light is brightest can be especially beneficial. If going outside is not an option, consider talking with your doctor about light therapy.

Stay Connected. Having a strong “real-life” social network builds resilience, our natural ability to “bounce back” in the face of adversity. Plan time with friends and family. Phone calls and social networking can help, but in-person is almost always better.

Get Rest. Healthy adults need at least 7 hours of sleep per day. Keep a regular sleep schedule. Consider reaching out to a mental health professional if you need more help.

Find more information at www.1in5.info