

[IMAGE]

3 Ways to Help Fight the Winter Blues

By Editorial Staff

Are the short days, long nights, bitter chills and inclement weather getting you down? Seasonal affective disorder, or appropriately, SAD, is a mood disorder characterized by feelings of sadness / depression during the winter months in otherwise mentally healthy people. If you're suffering from SAD, you may find yourself sleeping longer, lacking energy and experiencing depression.

The good news is there are ways to fight the "winter blues," as SAD has been called, without taking medication; here are three natural ways to help put a smile back on your face so you can enjoy the holiday season.

1. Show me the light: Evidence suggests light (or lack thereof) during the winter months can contribute to depressive symptoms. Why light? Because light affects serotonin, a hormone / neurotransmitter that helps regulate mood, emotions and behavior. Less sunlight / daylight in the winter months can mean less serotonin, which can cause problems with energy and mood. *The solution:* Try to get outdoors as much as possible when weather permits, particularly during sunny winter days. Think about it from more than a biochemical perspective: Being outside on a sunny day always seems to make people feel better compared to sitting inside.

Winter Blues - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark **2. Try a little D:** Vitamin D, that is, levels of which are also affected by lack of available sunlight during the winter months. Several studies correlate low vitamin D levels with seasonal affective disorder in particular. What's more, vitamin D production is the lowest during the winter months because the sun is the primary source. Less sunlight (and less time spent outdoors in general) equals less vitamin D production. *The solution:* If you can't get outside often during the winter (or year-round due to your occupation), make sure to take a daily vitamin D supplement to ensure your body is getting the D it needs to defend against mood problems – not to mention a host of other health problems linked to low levels.

3. Make a move: Remove yourself from the winter discussion for a minute and think about any time of the year. What happens when you don't exercise regularly? How do you feel as the weeks go by without

physical activity? For many people, lack of physical activity can mimic symptoms of SAD: low energy levels, depression, etc. *The solution:* Make time to exercise this winter. Go to the gym when the weather's bad or enjoy the fresh air and exercise outdoors when it's not raining / snowing, etc. Indoors or outdoors, make physical activity a priority and you'll feel better *and* look better.

The bottom line is that this winter doesn't have to be a SAD one, regardless of your circumstances. By adopting these and other strategies, you can help fight the winter blues and improve your health at the same time. Talk to your doctor of chiropractic for additional information.

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