

Beat the winter blues

Tips for a happier and healthier winter

At this time of year, a lack of sunlight can affect our mood, energy levels and appetite, and leads many people to suffer from a form of depression called Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).



Here are some suggestions to help you cope with this condition:

Exercise and eat well - Keep physically active during the winter as it can be very effective in lifting your mood and increasing your energy levels. A healthy diet is also important - try to balance the common SAD craving for carbohydrates, such as pasta and potatoes, with plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables.

Make the most of natural light - Take the opportunity to be exposed to natural light whenever possible. Small changes - like going outdoors around midday or on bright days, wearing sunglasses a bit less, and having pale colours in your home to reflect light - can all be useful.

Avoid stress - Try to plan ahead to reduce your number of stressful or difficult activities during this time. If you can, make more spare time to rest, relax or do pleasant activities in the winter.

Build a support network - Think about joining a support group - sharing your experience with others who know what it's like can be very therapeutic. Also, get as much support as possible from your family and friends.

Consider using a light box - A light box is a specialist device containing very bright fluorescent tubes and has been found to be an effective treatment for SAD as it increases your exposure to light during the winter months. It's best not to use it in the hour or so before you go to bed as the effect of the light may make it hard to sleep.

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