

In Good Health

Your Monthly Wellness Spotlight by PSA

SEASONAL DEPRESSION IS REAL! Learn more about the Symptoms and Treatment Methods for Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Sometimes our moods change when the seasons change. When the winter season starts, many start to feel down and depressed. If you feel these symptoms, you may be suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

Common Symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder

Millions of Americans suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder. SAD is a type of depression characterized by its recurrent seasonal patterns. The symptoms of this disorder last during a season, which is roughly around 4 to 5 months. Some of the symptoms may include:

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in the things you enjoy
- Weight/appetite changes – usually overeating and craving carbohydrates
- Sleep Problems – usually oversleeping
- Feeling sluggish
- Feeling agitated
- Low energy
- Feeling hopeless/worthless
- Difficulty concentrating
- Thoughts of suicide

Seasonal Affective Disorder Diagnoses

If you think you may be suffering with SAD, talk to your doctor. If you have an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), they may be able to help you too. To be diagnosed with SAD, you will have had:

- Symptoms of major depression like the ones listed above
- Symptoms lasting only during specific seasons, most commonly during the winter months

How to Treat Seasonal Affective Disorder

There are numerous treatment methods to be used to help with SAD, which include:

- **Light Treatment** – Since the early 80's, light therapy has been the main treatment for SAD. The goal of this treatment method is to expose those with SAD to bright lights every day to make up for the lack of sunlight they are not receiving during their seasonal depressive timeframe. Light boxes are used, and the person sits in front of the box for about 30 to 45 minutes.
- **Medications** – Because SAD, like other forms of depression, is associated with disturbances in serotonin, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) are used. The goal is to enhance the individual's mood.
- **Vitamin D** – Many people with SAD also have a deficiency in Vitamin D. Taking Vitamin D supplements may help. Talk with your doctor about getting your Vitamin D levels checked before beginning supplementation.

To Get Immediate HELP Call 988

If you or someone you know is in immediate danger or distress, 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems are affecting them, provide support, and connect them to resources if needed.

If you have further questions regarding any health matters, feel free to contact Danielle Herndon, RN, CMM – VP, Health Risk Management, at dherndon@psafinancial.com.