



It's That Time of Year!

Here we are in the middle of winter and many of us may be feeling the blues. Thanksgiving and Christmas have come and gone and the New Year is off to a quick start. It's hard to believe that January is already over. Where has the time gone? You may be thinking, "Why do I feel so down and out?" or "I have nothing to be sad about so what is wrong?" Always rule out a medical problem first but you may be suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). How appropriate that the acronym spells "Sad"!

SAD is a disorder that usually begins in the fall and lasts through winter. Usually the cause is a lack of sunlight which is our best source of Vitamin D. Shorter days, bad weather and a decrease in getting outside to soak up the sun's rays can cause a decrease in our mood. The lack of sunlight can disturb the sleep/wake cycle and decrease one's serotonin level which can lead to depression. SAD shares many of the same symptoms as the diagnosis of Major Depression such as feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day, feeling hopeless or worthless, having low energy, losing interest in activities you once enjoyed, having problems with sleeping, experiencing changes in your appetite or weight, feeling sluggish or agitated, having difficulty concentrating, and/or having frequent thoughts of death or suicide.

Symptoms of SAD may also include irritability, feeling tired or having low energy, problems getting along with other people, hypersensitivity to rejection, heavy feeling in the arms or legs, sleeping too much, appetite changes including craving foods that are high in carbohydrates and weight gain.

The good news is: "It's normal to feel down some days." But if you find yourself feeling down for a prolonged period of time and withdrawing from people or the activities you once enjoyed, see your doctor. This is especially important if you have sleep problems, a drastic change in your appetite, or begin to have thoughts of suicide.

Some people invest in a light therapy box with LED lighting to alleviate the symptoms of SAD. There are other positive things you can do to take care of yourself in the winter like getting outside in the sun when you can, interacting with friends as much as possible and eat foods rich in Vitamin D such as orange juice, fortified milk and cereals, egg yolks, tuna, salmon, etc. And finally, have no fear-- Spring is just around the corner!

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