

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that comes and goes in a seasonal pattern.

SAD is sometimes known as "winter depression" because the symptoms are usually more apparent and more severe during the winter.

A few people with SAD may have symptoms during the summer and feel better during the winter.



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Symptoms of SAD can include:

- a persistent low mood
- a loss of pleasure or interest in normal everyday activities
- irritability
- feelings of despair, guilt and worthlessness
- feeling lethargic (lacking in energy) and sleepy during the day
- sleeping for longer than normal and finding it hard to get up in the morning
- craving carbohydrates and gaining weight

For some people, these symptoms can be severe and have a significant impact on their day-to-day activities.

Treatments for SAD

A range of treatments are available for SAD. A GP will recommend the most suitable treatment programme for you.

The main treatments are:

- **lifestyle measures** – including getting as much natural sunlight as possible, exercising regularly and managing your stress levels
- **light therapy** – where a special lamp called a light box is used to simulate exposure to sunlight
- **talking therapies** – such as cognitive behavioral therapy or counselling
- **medication** – such as antidepressants

Ask your doctor to check your vitamin D levels, you may be deficient. Vitamin D deficiency can affect your mood.

Vitamin D supplements are widely available and is found naturally in egg yolks, dairy products and oily fish.