

# DON'T FALL INTO S.A.D:

## SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Don't brush off that yearly feeling as simply a case of the "winter blues" or a seasonal funk that you have to tough out on your own. Take steps to keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year.

By Ashley Foster



In most cases, seasonal affective disorder symptoms appear during late fall or early winter. Symptoms may start out mild and become more severe as the season progresses.

### When to see a doctor

If you feel down for days at a time and you can't get motivated to do activities you normally enjoy, see your doctor.



This is especially important if your sleep patterns and appetite have changed or if you feel hopeless, think about suicide, or turn to alcohol for comfort or relaxation.



Before your appointment, make a list of :

- Your symptoms
- Your depression patterns, such as when your depression starts and what seems to make it better or worse
- Any other mental or physical health problems you have
- Any recent major stressors or life changes
- All medications, vitamins or supplements you're taking, including dosages

### Fall and winter SAD

Symptoms specific to winter-onset SAD, sometimes called winter depression, may include:



- Irritability
- Tiredness or low energy
- Problems getting along with other people
- Hypersensitivity to rejection
- Heavy, "leaden" feeling in the arms or legs
- Oversleeping
- Appetite changes, especially a craving for foods high in carbohydrates
- Weight gain



S.A.D. can get worse if it's not treated.

These symptoms can include:

- Suicidal thoughts or behavior
- Social withdrawal
- School or work problems
- Substance abuse

Treatment can help prevent complications, especially if SAD is diagnosed and treated before symptoms get worse.



Your doctor or mental health provider may do a thorough evaluation that includes: physical exam, lab tests, & psychological evaluation.

These steps can help you manage seasonal affective disorder:



- Stick to your doctor's recommended treatment plan.
- Take care of yourself. Eat right and exercise!
- Practice stress management. Try yoga!
- Socialize. Connect with people you enjoy.
- Take a trip. If possible, go somewhere sunny and warm.

There's no known way to prevent the development of seasonal affective disorder.



However, if you take steps early on to manage symptoms, you may be able to prevent them from getting worse over time.

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For an extended version of this blog post, visit:  
[www.uaex.edu/nlj](http://www.uaex.edu/nlj)

For more information about Seasonal Affective Disorder visit:

[www.arfamilies.org](http://www.arfamilies.org)

[www.mayoclinic.org](http://www.mayoclinic.org)