

Natural Help 4...

Seasonal Affective Disorder



What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

When the weather is sunny and bright people tend to feel more upbeat and positive. When the **weather is gloomy, cold and dismal, moods tend to slump** and often people feel a little down.

However, for certain individuals these mood shifts develop into a type of depression that accompanies seasonal changes and affects their ability to function normally. Recurrent episodes of **clinical depression that surface during seasonal changes**, particularly winter, are referred to as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

This condition is caused by **a biochemical imbalance in the hypothalamus** – the part of the brain that governs the primary functions of the body such as appetite, temperature, sleep, sex drive, mood and activity.

The hypothalamus is stimulated by natural light entering the eye and striking the retina. When the days are short and sunlight is reduced, the hypothalamus has to adjust its response to the various body mechanisms, slowing down these functions.

What is Winter Depression?

A **milder form of this type of depression** is more commonly referred to as winter depression, winter blues, cabin fever or hibernation reaction. While winter depression can be uncomfortable, the condition is not unbearable.

The classic symptoms of winter depression include fatigue, oversleeping, carbohydrate craving, weight gain, lack of sex drive, and sometimes even hopelessness, social withdrawal and suicidal thoughts. These **symptoms are similar to those of SAD** - [Seasonal Affective Disorder](#) – but not as severe.

Winter depression usually **begins in late fall or early winter** and generally disappears by the summer (begins in October or November and subsides in March or April). It frequently affects people living in the northern geographic regions. People with winter depression are affected by the changes in environmental light such as overcast weather or dim lighting which worsens their depression.

Winter is not the only season responsible for mood slumps - a less common type of [Seasonal Affective disorder](#) is called summer depression and it usually begins in late spring or early summer and goes away by winter.

Diagnosing Seasonal Affective Disorder

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Never disregard professional medical advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this ebook or on ANY website.

Very often SAD is difficult to diagnose because the symptoms presented are so similar to other types of depression. It is sometimes misdiagnosed as a physical condition such as hypoglycemia, hypothyroidism, infectious mononucleosis, and other viral infections.

The diagnosis for SAD is based upon the reported symptoms, along with a history of seasonal episodes. A Seasonal Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) will also determine:

- Sleep patterns
- Weight changes
- Energy levels
- Mood changes
- Social activity

Common symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder

- Weight gain
- A change in appetite (carbohydrate and sweet craving)
- A heavy feeling in the arms or legs
- Physical ailments such as body aches, constipation, diarrhea
- Low energy levels
- Fatigue
- A tendency to sleep for longer periods
- Loss of sex drive
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability and anxiety
- Hopelessness
- Suicidal thoughts
- Crying spells
- Increased sensitivity to social rejection
- Social withdrawal


Common symptoms of **Summer Depression** include the following:

- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Sleep Disorders (such as Insomnia)
- Irritability
- Crying spells
- Trouble concentrating

SAD affects approximately half a million people in the United States. It is more common in women than in men. People living in the northern and southern hemisphere are also affected, although SAD is more common in the northern geographic countries where the winter day is shorter. This disorder tends to begin in people between the age of 20 and 40. It may also affect children and teenagers. The risk of SAD decreases as adults become older.

What Causes Seasonal Affective Disorder?

The exact **causes of SAD are unknown.** Research shows that a lack of bright light during the winter months may be the cause of the development of



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Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

symptoms of [seasonal affective disorder](#) - bright light affects the chemicals in the brain.

Other research shows that a disrupted body clock (circadian rhythm) causes depression and lethargy. In addition, low serotonin (neurotransmitters carrying messages to the brain) and melatonin levels (the hormone which makes us sleep) can be found in people suffering from SAD.

Help for Seasonal Affective Disorder

In many cases, people who experience **symptoms of [seasonal affective disorder](#)** are often misdiagnosed because their symptoms are varied and common to other ailments. However, there are effective ways to treat and control SAD and it is not necessary for people to suffer year after year.

Symptoms of [seasonal affective disorder](#) associated with **depression can affect daily living** and should not be ignored. If you are wondering **how to beat [seasonal depression](#)**; treatment options include conventional therapy, psychotherapy, complementary therapy, natural therapy or a combination of these approaches.

Treatment Options for SAD

Conventional Therapy

Conventional drugs for the treatment of SAD include antidepressant medication such as Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil or Celexa. While these may be beneficial in the short term, many long term effects are unknown.

In addition, side effects often include insomnia, reduced sex drive, weightgain, headaches and other symptoms, while withdrawal symptoms when stopping these drugs are frequently reported.

Psychotherapy

Counseling and cognitive-behavioral therapy can be very helpful and provide support during the difficult months as well as help with lifestyle changes.

Complementary Therapy

- Light therapy (phototherapy) requires you to sit in front of a light box or special lamp that is 10 to 20 times brighter than ordinary indoor lights for approximately 30 minutes each day.
- Massage
- Diet rich in fruit and vegetables

Natural Remedies

There are a number of natural and holistic remedies that are better suited for the body than conventional medicine and can provide an answer on **how to beat [seasonal depression](#)**. **Herbal and homeopathic remedies can provide harmony** in the body to better balance your moods and feelings without the side

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effects and potential for dependency associated with the synthetic drugs.

Some commonly recommended herbal remedies for SAD include St. John's Wort, Passiflora and Skullcap. There are also a number of homeopathic remedies which can be of benefit depending on symptoms and constitutional makeup. Some studies have suggested that **certain fragrances are also effective in lifting mood.**

Aromatherapy essential oils of lemon, grapefruit and geranium are well known for their anti-depressant properties and may be introduced into the environment by means of oil diffusers, space sprays, in a bath oil or during massage.

Tips for Coping with Seasonal Affective Disorder

If you are wondering **how to beat [seasonal depression](#)**, here are some tips to help you cope with [Seasonal Affective Disorder](#):

- **Allow more natural sunlight into your day** by spending time outdoors, keeping the curtains or blinds open and decorating your space with bright, cheerful colors
- **Eat a well balanced diet**
- **Exercise regularly**, specifically outdoors if possible, by jogging, walking, cycling or playing golf. Studies have shown that one hour in the winter sunlight can lift your spirits
- **Take a winter vacation in a sunny location**
- **Stop negative thoughts** and try to develop a [positive attitude](#) that you are going to enjoy winter
- **Incorporate more laughter** into your life – it is said to release the chemical, dopamine into the brain which counteracts SAD
- **Surround yourself with supportive friends and family**
- **Minimize stress** by practicing deep breathing exercises, meditation, yoga or pilates
- **Do things you enjoy** such as reading, listening to music, shopping, painting or cooking
- **Seek counseling** or psychotherapy

The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.



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Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, [emotional](#), mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be

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further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

Related Natural Remedies:

MindSoothe[™]: Promote balanced mood and feelings of wellbeing.

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