



live well, work well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home, and life—brought to you by the insurance and healthcare specialists at Moreton & Company.

Mental Health News: SAD

Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a recurring depression that affects individuals during the cold winter months and then recedes during spring and summer months.

How Common is SAD?

It is estimated that between four and six percent of Americans suffer from SAD. Three quarters of those affected by SAD are women, mostly in their 20s, 30s and 40s. Though SAD is most common during these ages, it can also occur in children, adolescents and the elderly.

What Causes SAD?

The exact cause of SAD is still unknown, but researchers suspect that an increased level of melatonin in the blood could be a factor. Melatonin increases the need and desire to sleep and because SAD affects people during the colder, darker months, the body produces more of it. Researchers also add that with decreased exposure to sunlight, the biological clock that regulates mood, sleep, and hormones are delayed, running more slowly in

winter. This is why those most affected by SAD tend to live in northern states, because these areas experience decreased daylight for months at a time.

What are the Symptoms?

Symptoms of SAD can vary, depending on the severity of the condition, but generally include:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Low energy and fatigue
- Decreased interest in daily activities, especially social
- Moodiness and irritability
- Increased appetite & weight gain
- Cravings for carbohydrates
- Increased sleep, with more daytime sleepiness
- Loss of interest in sex

Coping with SAD

In severe cases, your doctor can prescribe medication, but oftentimes, self-help tactics can be just as effective:

- Increase the amount of light in your home; open blinds, add skylights and trim trees that block sunlight.
- Get outside; walk outdoors on sunny days, even during winter months.
- Exercise regularly; physical exercise helps relieve stress and anxiety, which can exacerbate SAD.
- Find ways to relax.
- Learn how to manage stress better.
- Take a trip; if possible, take winter vacations to sunny, warm destinations.



Did you know...?

If you frequently suffer from the “winter blues”, you are not alone, and it is not all in your head.