

## What is SAD?

When the mercury heads towards single digits on the thermometer, our moods can start to match the grey skies. Some may describe this as an extreme case of winter blues but what you may not be familiar with is its medical name, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – a recognised mood disorder which can affect people during the winter months.

Thankfully there are plenty of strategies to see you through the cold months with your sense of humour and sunny disposition still intact.

SAD was first noted in Scandinavia. It's estimated that around 20% of Swedes suffer with the problem due to their long, dark winters.

## What causes SAD?

Why some people develop this disorder and others don't is not known, but it's linked to the body's circadian rhythm – the natural body clock that controls energy flow during the day. Possible causes include disruptions in the production of melatonin (the hormone that helps govern sleep) and/or serotonin (a neurotransmitter chemical).



Flowers are known to make people feel happy and have a positive impact on social behaviour.

## Signs and symptoms of SAD

- Oversleeping
- Lethargy
- Depression
- Overeating
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Craving sweet food and carbohydrates
- Weight gain
- Loss of libido
- Aches and pains
- Headaches
- Mood changes
- Difficulty concentrating
- Social withdrawal.



## What you can do to relieve SAD over the winter months

- **Exercise regularly**  
Walking outdoors increases sun exposure. When it's too cold and wet outside, look for fun indoor activities, such as boxing or hula hooping.
- **Bring more light into your home**  
Trim back trees, open curtains, install a skylight.
- **Increase sun exposure**  
Sit by windows during the winter to increase sun exposure.
- **Nutritious diet**  
Eat a nutritious diet and cut back on caffeine, sugar and refined products.
- **Winter sun**  
If you can afford to, take a winter holiday somewhere bright and warm.
- **Socialise**  
It might feel too cold to go out, but you'll be surprised with how good you feel if you meet a friend for coffee, dinner or sign-up for an evening class.
- **Get cooking**  
There's nothing more comforting than the aroma of a simmering pot of soup or stew.
- **Brave the elements**  
Wrap up and get outside with a cup of hot soup.



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