

## Condition:



# Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

## Covered in this fact sheet

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?	1
Seasonal Affective Disorder and work	2
How do I know – What does SAD feel like?	2
What causes SAD	3
Talking to your GP / health professional	3
Treatments	3
Self Management	4
Useful links	5

## What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that some people experience during a particular time of year, which in most cases is, the winter months. Those affected by SAD experience a change in mood and energy levels during this time of year.

# Seasonal Affective Disorder and Work

If you believe you may experience SAD don't ignore the signs:

- You may be more sensitive to stress
- You may avoid interacting with colleagues
- You may have lost your interest in your work
- Your concentration is poorer
- You have more sweet cravings in the afternoons
- Your concentration is poor
- You take your whole weekend to recuperate for the next working week

### Use Light

- Get a desk top light box
- Sit nearer to windows and natural light
- Get outside during your breaks

### Speak to your employer

You may be able to access other adjustments or flexible working perhaps so you can leave work before it gets dark or work from home.

## How do I know? What does Seasonal Affective Disorder Feel Like?

SAD is more than just the “winter blues”. Typical symptoms of SAD might include:

Low mood and feeling depressed, hopeless or worthless

Loss of interest in activities

Increased appetite and cravings

Lethargy or fatigue

Irritability

Social withdrawal and isolation

Feelings of suicide

Difficulty in concentrating or making decisions

Loss of libido

## What Causes Seasonal Affective Disorder?

The main cause is the lack of sunlight during the winter and the reduction of daylight hours. This is also linked to a lack of vitamin D which can impact on our mood and energy levels. In the UK Public Health England say more than one in five people may experience this.

## Talking to Your GP or Health Professional

Seasonal Affective Disorder can be diagnosed by a GP or qualified mental health professional.

If the typical pattern is that you experience symptoms during the winter months which clear up with the onset of increased sunlight in the Spring, and this occurs year in, year out – you are likely to be affected by SAD.

## Treatments

<h3>Talking therapies</h3>	<h3>Bright light therapy</h3>
<p>Talking therapies such as counselling, CBT or psychotherapy.</p>	<p>This involves the individual sitting in front of a light box for 30-60 minutes every morning. This can either be self-administered or with the supervision of a medical professional.</p>
<h3>Seeing your GP</h3>	<h3>Blood tests</h3>
<p>Seeing your GP who may prescribe anti-depressant drugs, which can help to cope with the symptoms of SAD, although they are not a cure in themselves.</p>	<p>Blood tests to determine your levels of vitamin D may indicate a need for additional high strength supplements.</p>

## Self-Management

These are simple actions that can easily be incorporated into your day that will greatly enhance your overall sense of personal wellbeing.



### Be Active

Because **exercising** releases feel-good chemicals like serotonin and endorphins, it can be just as effective as medicine when treating mild depression.



### Light

Consider using a light box or making the most of the natural light available during daylight hours and get outside.



### Connect

Stay connected to friends and family. Build a support network - Knowing that you are not alone and that help is available can make SAD easier to cope with.



### Sleep

Make sure you get the right amount of sleep, neither too little nor too much.

## Useful links

