

Five Tips to Help You Cope with the Winter Blues

It's easy to feel down during these grey winter months. Are the cloudy days and early nights making you feel a bit moodier than usual? You could be living with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a type of depression that some people experience during a particular season, although, most commonly felt during the winter months. Some of the common symptoms include low energy, excessive sleeping, changes to appetite or diet, and feeling depressed, sluggish, or anxious. If you are feeling these effects, the first thing to know is that you are not alone. About 10 million Americans are affected by SAD, with women four times as likely to be diagnosed with it than men.

Five Tips to Boost Your Mood:

Chin up! There are ways to help these symptoms and get you feeling more like yourself.

- 1. A Healthy Diet:** A diet rich in protein, simple carbohydrates, B12 and D can actually help you combat the symptoms of SAD. Next time you feel low, indulge in your favorite pasta dish to help you feel better. Ensuring you eat meals regularly throughout the day can also help boost your mood and energy levels, so it is important to feed your body, even when you have little appetite.
- 2. Light Therapy:** During the winter months, most people do not get enough sunlight. A specialized light box is designed to simulate the sun and help to release serotonin in your brain, which is the chemical that helps to regulate mood, well-being and sleep. Using a light box for at least two hours a day can increase your happiness levels and help you get a better night's sleep.
- 3. Exercise:** Exercising regularly has also been shown to help mental health and fight off some symptoms of SAD. Taking a simple hour-long walk, a yoga or tai chi class, simple way to get exercise while increasing your happiness and decreasing feelings of anxiety.
- 4. Good Thinking:** Did you know that simply thinking more positively can boost your mood? We aren't always aware of how negative our thoughts may be, which can make a situation worse. Being more conscious of your thoughts and actively challenging your mind to think positively can help reduce stress while increasing your happiness.
- 5. Counseling:** Sometimes trying to help yourself may not be enough, and that's okay. It can be beneficial to seek help from a professional, especially if you are feeling overwhelmed and don't know where to start. Counselors can guide you through the process of recognizing triggers and creating a plan of action tailored to you.