

# SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

**Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)** is a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons. In most cases, SAD symptoms begin in the late fall and early winter as the days become shorter. As days become shorter, the lower levels of sunlight may affect your body chemistry, by altering your levels of melatonin (which increases sleepiness), and serotonin (which regulates mood). For those suffering with SAD, these changes lead to feelings of hopelessness and irritability, and can make performing everyday tasks extremely difficult.



## **RISK FACTORS FOR SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER**

SAD is most common in people who live farther north, where the days in winter are shorter. Women are more likely than men to experience SAD, and risk of SAD increases with age. Risk also increases in those with depression or bipolar disorder, as well as those with a family history of depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia.

## **SYMPTOMS**

Many symptoms of fall-onset ("winter depression") SAD include those of major depression, such as:

- Low energy and feeling sluggish
- Feelings of sadness most of the day, nearly every day
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Changes in appetite, including weight gain
- Oversleeping
- Increased anxiety
- Social withdrawal
- Suicidal thoughts or behavior

## **ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:**

\*To contact the 24/7 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988

\*\*If you or an eligible dependent is struggling with a substance use disorder or need a mental health referral, please contact the MEND Program at (212) 366-7590 or by email at [Mend@nyccbf.org](mailto:Mend@nyccbf.org).  
<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/seasonal-affective-disorder>

## **GETTING HELP**

There are several ways to treat SAD, and many people receive a combination of treatments, including:

- Vitamin D
- Psychotherapy ("Talk Therapy")
- Light Therapy
- Antidepressant medications

People often don't get the mental health services they need because they don't know where to start. **If you are experiencing one or more of the symptoms of SAD, consult your healthcare provider to determine the best course of treatment for you.**