

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER DURING THE PANDEMIC

If you experience Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) - a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons – this fall and winter may be a bit more challenging because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF.

Think back to practices that helped back in the spring

Even though things are continually changing, think back and identify practices and routines that were helpful. Write them down so you can refer to them when you are feeling anxious or sad.

Talk about your concerns with friends and loved ones.

When you share your difficulties, fears and struggles about the upcoming season with a loved one, you are reminded that you aren't as isolated as the winter months might make you feel. You may also find that your loved ones have similar struggles and you can think through coping strategies together.

If you are experiencing symptoms of SAD, reach out to a professional for additional support.

- ✔ Call Project Renew at 701-223-1510 (M-F between 8-5pm CT) to receive free support services.
- ✔ Call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for free and confidential emotional support for individuals in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- ✔ Find behavioral health treatment services near you by searching the Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator: <https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

Exercise can be particularly helpful for easing symptoms of depression. Bundle up in your cold-weather gear and head out for a quick walk. If that isn't possible, search for free at-home exercise videos and spend some time taking care of your body.

Plan ahead for the holidays.

Holidays will look very different for many families this year because of the pandemic. Take some time to identify new, safe ways to celebrate, reminisce and reconnect with loved ones. Think about it as an opportunity to do new things, rather than feeling as though something has been taken away.

SYMPTOMS OF SAD

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Having low energy
- Having problems with sleeping
- Experiencing changes in your appetite or weight
- Feeling sluggish or agitated
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling hopeless, worthless or guilty
- Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide
- Oversleeping (*specific to winter-onset SAD*)
- Appetite changes, especially a craving for foods high in carbohydrates (*specific to winter-onset SAD*)
- Weight gain (*specific to winter-onset SAD*)
- Tiredness or low energy (*specific to winter-onset SAD*)