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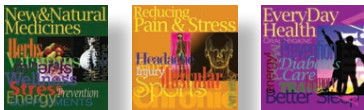
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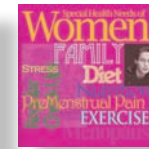
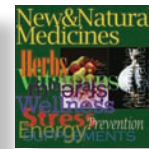
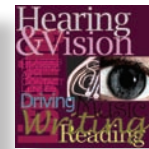
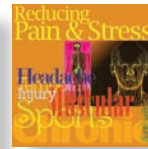
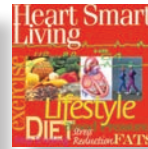
**MedPaks Division**

**Tel: (608) 793-1828**



**Seasonal Affective Disorder**  
**(SAD)**





## What is SAD?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that occurs at the same time every year. Symptoms arise in the fall, continue through the winter, and improve in the spring. The exact cause of SAD is unknown. However, in the winter months the disturbance of your biological clock may contribute to SAD. The decreased sunlight in the fall and winter disrupts your body's signal which informs your body to wake up or fall asleep. Also a drop in melatonin (*a natural hormone*) or serotonin (*a brain chemical*) can also affect the mood and cause SAD.

## Who is more likely to have symptoms of SAD?

- **Females:** Studies have shown that women are diagnosed more often with SAD than men.
- **People who live far from the equator:** SAD affects people who live further away from the equator more often because of the decreased sunlight in the winter.
- **People who have a family history of SAD:** People who have a family member with SAD have a higher chance of experiencing SAD themselves.

## What are the symptoms of SAD?

Winter onset SAD symptoms include: depression, feelings of hopelessness, anxiety, loss of energy, social withdrawal, oversleeping, loss of interest in daily activities, appetite changes, weight gain, and difficulty concentrating.

## What are treatment options?

Before starting any treatment option, talk to your doctor about your current symptoms and your doctor and you will determine what treatment will be most effective for you.

- **Light therapy:** Standing close to a bright light from a light box may be helpful. The light acts like outdoor light and may help improve the brain chemicals which affect mood.
- **Medications:** Antidepressants can be beneficial in certain people.
- **Psychotherapy:** Talking with someone about your mood and negative thoughts could help you cope with SAD.
- **Lifestyle changes:** Opening blinds and sitting closer to bright windows at home or at work can elevate your mood. Being physically active can also help with SAD. Finally, just spending time outside will increase your mood during the winter months.

## When to see a doctor?

It is normal for everyone to have days where your mood is down. However, if these symptoms continue for a long period of time and have been affecting your daily activities making an appointment with your doctor may be valuable. When seeing your doctor be prepared to talk about your symptoms.

To get ready for your appointment, write down your symptoms and your current medications to help your doctor determine the best treatment for you.

