

LIFE STYLE

HEALTH

Let There Be Light

When the sun starts to rise later and mornings FEEL more like nights, an estimated 6% of Americans suffer from seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. Symptoms include depression, lethargy, irritability, and a desire to avoid social situations. Experts still are uncertain what exactly causes SAD or why symptoms peak in January and February, but there are several treatment options, according to the [Wall Street Journal](#).

Light Therapy

Use a light-therapy box (which provides intense illumination) for 15 to 20 minutes daily for at least three weeks. This treatment works best when synched to your circadian rhythm, which can be calculated at the Center for Environmental Therapeutics Website (www.cet.org).

Dawn Simulation

A device gradually increases light to simulate dawn in your bedroom. Although there are inexpensive dawn simulator alarm clocks, the CET recommends a model that attaches to an overhead fixture.

Negative Air Ions

Research has found that these extra electrons can work as well as light therapy. One generator model can be strapped to your wrist and used 30 to 60 minutes daily, while others work overnight.

Antidepressants

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, or SSRIs, such as Prozac, can be as effective as light therapy. But light therapy works faster and has fewer side effects.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Researchers at the University of Vermont used a CBT program in which patients chose to overcome their negative thoughts and behaviors and embrace enjoyable winter activities.

Vitamin D

Researchers agree more study is needed on the effects and doses of Vitamin D, but some experts recommend daily intake of at least 4,000 IUs of D-3.

Outdoor Exercise

Some experts advise taking a morning or noontime walk.

Diet

Don't indulge your urges to carbo-load. Eat more vegetables and keep meals light to improve insulin regulation and your mood.