

Woes Us

Blues on the Move: Get Ready to Fight SAD

Feeling down? Remedies for seasonal affective disorder can help you perk up instead of holing up.

By Amy Linn, 12-01-09



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Darkness, darkness, be my pillow? If you're not a fan of the [Jesse Colin Young](#) lyric or think darkness is smothering—and not a comfort—join the crowd. The *Wall Street Journal* today published a [story](#) about the aptly-acronymed seasonal affective disorder (SAD), and said that it strikes (can this be true?) *65 percent of Americans*, “causing lethargy, irritability and a desire to avoid social situations.” (And here we just thought it was the recession.)

Journal writer [Melinda Beck](#) suggests that people with SAD speak with a doctor and/or counselor, and try these options:

-- Light therapy. This involves sitting in front of a light box that provides 10,000 lux of white light for 15 to 20 minutes daily. (Read the directions, keep your eyes open, but don't look directly at the light).

-- Vitamin D supplements. Many Missoula doctors of late have begun testing patients for Vitamin D deficiencies and finding them as a matter of course, since Montanans typically only get direct sun in summer (the rays create vitamin D in our bodies). People who work indoors all year can have even more trouble getting a healthy dose of D, and might be at risk for depressed mood as a result. (According to the *Journal*, UVB rays in the northern part of the nation “aren't strong enough to provide vitamin D” between October and March.) Before taking any supplement, consult your doctor.

-- Exercise outdoors. Even something as simple as a regular walk can help alleviate symptoms, experts say.

-- Get info and advice. The [Mayo Clinic](#) is a good repository and even has its own depression blog, plus a (cheerful looking) online psychiatrist.

Find out more at the [Center for Environmental Therapeutics](#), a nonprofit that studies SAD and has an online store that sells light boxes, light protection glasses, dawn simulation therapy devices, and other products thought to fight the disorder. If you decide to try a light box, the CET also provides a handy [free online assessment](#) to help you figure out what time of day to use it for optimum results.