

MELT THE BLUES AWAY

Feeling down this winter?
If so, you're not alone.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of recurring depression that affects about 5% of the population during the months when daylight is in short supply—particularly in winter.¹

One should start by consulting a healthcare professional who can recommend a personalized treatment. With their supervision, consider trying the following tips to feel better.

LIGHTEN THE MOOD

A common treatment for SAD can be done right from your own home: light therapy.

The theory behind this technique involves our circadian rhythm—the biological clock in our bodies that roughly align with a 24-hour day.² The most important trigger for our circadian rhythm to stay in sync is natural light... so when daylight starts receding during autumn, our rhythms can get out of alignment.

Thankfully, there are lamps that mimic the sunlight our circadian rhythm needs to stay on course. Not just any light source will work for this sort of treatment, however. An effective SAD lamp needs to be a certain size with a specific lux output and viewing angle to be effective.

VERIFY YOUR VITAMIN D LEVELS

35% of Americans are deficient in vitamin D—also known as the sunshine vitamin.³ And in the winter, when the days are short and the skies are gray, our vitamin D levels tend to drop even further.

Low levels of vitamin D have been linked to SAD and other health risks.⁴ This shouldn't be a surprise, given how closely the vitamin is tied to the amount of natural light exposure we get.

Thankfully, replenishing it is simple—even when you're stuck indoors. You can pick up a vitamin D supplement (found at any drugstore) or just change your diet to incorporate more foods rich in the substance.

Unsure how your vitamin D levels are faring? You can have them checked by your doctor with a simple blood test—that way you'll know just how big a factor vitamin D is playing in your mood.

SEE A PROFESSIONAL

One of the few silver linings to the COVID-19 pandemic is that access to these services is easier than ever. Many healthcare facilities now let you see your doctor right from the comfort of your own home. Oftentimes, you can discuss your symptoms and get a prescription in one short, virtual visit.

Virtual therapy is also booming. These online services provide licensed therapists from across the country you can connect with from your screen. Many also have financial aid options if initial rates don't fall within your budget.

If you've struggled with SAD (or any mental health disorder) and DIY remedies aren't cutting it, discuss these options with your healthcare provider.

PUT YOUR BLUES ON ICE

This time of year can be tough even in the best of circumstances—let alone during a global pandemic.

But you can start getting help and feeling better, because you deserve a bright 2022!



¹Torres, Felix M.D. "Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)." *American Psychiatric Association*, 2020

²Campbell, Philip D. M.Sc.; Miller, Ann M. M.D.; Ph.D., Woesner, Mary E. M.D. "Bright Light Therapy: Seasonal Affective Disorder and Beyond." *National Institutes of Health*, 2017

³Omeed, Sizar; Khare, Swapnil; Goyal, Amandeep; Bansal, Pankaj; Givler, Amy "Vitamin D Deficiency." *National Center for Biotechnology Information*, 2021

⁴"Seasonal Affective Disorder." *National Institute of Mental Health*