





# Seasonal affective disorder

Also called: SAD, seasonal depression

A mood disorder characterized by depression that occurs at the same time every year.

## Very common

More than 3 million US cases per year

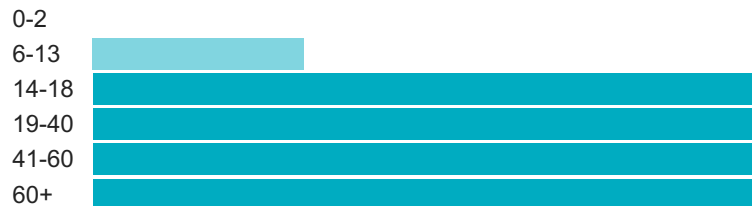
-  Treatable by a medical professional
-  Medium-term: resolves within months
-  Usually self-diagnosable
-  Lab tests or imaging not required

Seasonal affective disorder often starts in the fall and may continue into the winter months.

Symptoms include fatigue, depression, hopelessness, and social withdrawal.

Treatment includes light therapy (phototherapy), talk therapy, and medications.

## Ages affected



## Symptoms

### Usually self-diagnosable

Symptoms include fatigue, depression, hopelessness, and social withdrawal.

### People may experience:

**Mood:** anxiety, apathy, general discontent, loneliness, loss of interest, mood swings, or sadness

**Sleep:** excess sleepiness, insomnia, or sleep deprivation

**Whole body:** appetite changes or fatigue

**Behavioral:** irritability or social isolation

**Also common:** depression, lack of concentration, or weight gain

## Treatments

### Treatment consists of therapy

Treatment includes light therapy (phototherapy), talk therapy, and medications.

### Self-care

**Physical exercise:** Aerobic activity for 20-30 minutes 5 days a week improves cardiovascular health. If injured, pursuing an activity that avoids the injured muscle group or joint can help maintain physical function while recovering.

### Therapies

**Cognitive behavioral therapy:** A talk therapy focused on modifying negative thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses associated with psychological distress.

**Chronotherapy:** Going to bed at a later time each night, all the way around the clock, until the sleep schedule is reset to normal.

**Light therapy:** Exposure to bright light using a device called a light box. Mimics natural sunlight.

### Medications

**Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI):** Eases symptoms of depressed mood and anxiety.

- Sertraline (Zoloft)
- Fluoxetine (Prozac, Sarafem, and Prozac Weekly)

**Antidepressant:** Prevents or relieves depression and elevates mood.

- Bupropion (Zyban, Aplenzin, Wellbutrin XL, Wellbutrin SR, and Forfivo XL)

### Specialists

**Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

**Clinical psychologist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with talk therapy.

**Psychiatrist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with medications.

Consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or a emergency number immediately.

**Sources:** Mayo Clinic and others. [Learn more](#)