



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

What is SAD, and how can you manage it?

The clocks go at the end of October, and Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) will affect 1 in 20 of us. SAD is a type of depression triggered by seasonal changes. Here's what you should know about SAD and how to care for yourself or someone else experiencing it.

Why do people get SAD?

Some of the triggers for SAD are the decrease in daylight hours and worsening weather. According to the NHS, you're also more likely to suffer from SAD if you have a family member with the disorder, or a mental health condition such as depression.

What signs should I look out for?

If you think you may be living with SAD, here are some of the signs:

- Losing interest in everyday activities.
- Feeling anxious or irritable.
- Sleeping for longer than usual and finding it hard to get up.
- Trouble sleeping despite low energy levels.
- Increased appetite and craving for carbohydrates.
- Finding it hard to stay connected with family and friends.
- Not wanting to go outside.

How can I manage SAD?

- Make the most of daylight hours. Exposure to natural light can boost serotonin and melatonin levels, lifting our moods and improving our sleep. Maybe get out for a brief walk during the day.
- Try to make your work and home environments as light and airy as possible.
- Stay active. Getting outside during daylight hours or exercising indoors, even briefly, can improve your mental health and how you feel overall.
- Eat well to stay well. When we're feeling low, cooking and eating might not be priorities, which means we can go for 'unhealthier' or convenient food choices.
- Go for nutrient-dense foods that boost your energy levels.
- Reach out. Talking about how you're feeling to someone you trust, like a friend, family member, Shed colleague or healthcare professional, can open avenues to more support.

Where can I obtain further information?

The NHS website contains a more in-depth information source – see www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/overview/