Seasonal Affective Disorder and Winter Blues

If you experience feelings of depression and lethargy during winter, you may be suffering from seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Over these darker, typically colder months, people with SAD often experience feelings of depression and lack of energy. SAD affects an estimated 11 million Americans every year. An additional 25 million people experience a milder form of the disorder that most doctors refer to as the *winter blues*.

SAD is often difficult to diagnose because its symptoms mirror other disorders, including clinical depression. If you feel depressed or routinely depleted of energy, talk to your doctor. Available treatments to help control symptoms of SAD include light therapy, antidepressant medications and counseling.

Tips for Coping With the Winter Blues

- Spend more time outdoors, especially on sunny days.
- Exercise to boost your energy levels.
- Don't oversleep. Get on a sleep schedule that allows you to be awake as much as possible during sunlight hours.
- Plan vacations to bright, sunny climates in winter.
- Brighten your home. Add lamps and lighting fixtures. Open all window coverings during the day.

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