

Potty Pointers

Winter Blues and You

Introduction

During the cold winter months, it is not uncommon for some people to experience the “winter blues.” What many people don’t know is that the winter blues is actually a mild depression brought on by a decrease in exposure to sunlight as autumn deepens.



Winter Blues and Seasonal Affective Disorder

The winter blues has a more severe counterpart: Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). SAD is another type of depression that, like winter blues, is related to an access problem between the brain’s pituitary and hypothalamus glands caused by lack of sunlight. Individuals suffering from SAD should seek medical advice. About 6 percent of Americans have SAD, and another 14 percent have the winter blues.

Do You Have Winter Blues?

Although the winter blues are not as severe as long-term depression, they can change the way a person thinks, reacts, and deals with everyday challenges.

If you experience two or more of the following symptoms each year in the fall and into the spring you may suffer from the winter blues:

- Increased feelings of lethargy
- Difficulty waking up in the mornings as the days get shorter
- Difficulty concentrating and thinking creatively in comparison to the summer months
- Incorrectly blaming oneself for things that go wrong
- Difficulty performing tasks that normally seem to be easy/enjoyable
- Increased craving for carbohydrate-rich food like chocolate and sodas

Treatment

There is no known way to prevent the development of winter blues; however, there are steps you can take to manage symptoms and keep them from getting worse over time:

- Regular use of light boxes
- Exercise outside
- Eat larger portions of complex carbohydrates
- Resist unhealthy snacks
- Limit oversleeping
- Set a regular bedtime
- Wake up at the same time each day