

Seasonal Affective Disorder



MDAM

MOOD DISORDERS
ASSOCIATION OF MANITOBA
WESTMAN

*Helping People
Help Themselves*

Compiled by 2023 Green Team

What is SAD?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is triggered by the changing of seasons; it starts and ends about at the same time each year. The majority of people experience symptoms beginning in the fall and lasting the winter. Typically, symptoms go away in the spring and summer. Less frequently, symptoms develop in the spring or early summer and disappear in the fall or winter. (Mayo Clinic, 2021)

Symtoms of SAD

Possible symptoms and signs of include:

- Feeling drained, sad or down every day for most of the day
- Losing interest in previous activities you liked
- Poor energy and sluggishness
- Problems with excessive sleep
- Cravings for carbohydrates, overeating and weight gain
- Having trouble staying focused
- Having a sense of worthlessness, guilt or hopelessness
- Thoughts of suicide

(Mayo Clinic, 2021)

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Symptoms of SAD continued...

In Spring and Summer symptoms may include:

- Sleep problems
- Restlessness
- Overthinking
- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Weight loss/gain

In Fall and Winter symptoms may include:

- Weight loss/gain
- Carbohydrate cravings
- Tiredness or low energy
- Oversleeping

(Mayo Clinic, 2021)

Causes

The main cause of SAD remains unknown, but some factors include:

- Your biological clock and melatonin levels may be disrupted by changes in the light which could upset your sleep pattern.
- Reduced sunlight can cause a drop in serotonin that may trigger depression.

(Mayo Clinic, 2021)

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Risk Factors

Women are diagnosed with seasonal affective disorder more frequently than men. This may be owing to men seeking treatment less often due to stigma. It is also more common in younger people than in older individuals. Some factors that may increase your risk of SAD include:

- Family history
- Low level of vitamin D
- Living far from the equator
- Having major depression or bipolar disorder

(Mayo Clinic, 2021)

Complications

When you notice the signs and symptoms of seasonal affective disorder, it is advisable to take them seriously because if not treated, SAD can get worse and lead to major problems. Some of these complication include:

- Social withdrawal
- Substance abuse
- Suicidal thoughts

(Mayo Clinic, 2021)

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When To See a Doctor

It's common to experience feelings of sadness. But if you consistently experience feelings of sadness and lack the will to engage in your favourite activities, speak with your doctor. This is especially crucial if you feel hopeless or have suicidal thoughts.

It is particularly important to do so because the symptoms have the potential to escalate to something more serious. (Mayo Clinic, 2021)

Preventions and What Might Help

Ways of managing SAD include:

- Talking to your doctor once you notice the symptoms
- Psychotherapy
- Light therapy (SAD lamp)
- Medications

(n.d.)

Resources

Mayo Clinic. "Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) - Symptoms and Causes." *Mayo Clinic*, 14 Dec. 2021, www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20364651 .

M. (n.d.). Steps to keep your mood and motivation steady throughout the year-Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) - Diagnosis & treatment - Mayo Clinic. Mayo Clinic. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/seasonal-affective-disorder/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20364722>