

Stall Talk

December 2019

Provided by the Tulsa Health Department's Working for Balance program

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Typically starting in late fall and lasting until spring or summer, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that's related to changes in seasons. Symptoms of SAD include feeling depressed most of the day nearly every day, low energy, feeling sluggish, agitated, hopeless, worthless or guilty and not having the motivation to be social or do the things you enjoy. SAD is diagnosed when the full criteria for major depression, coinciding with specific seasons for at least 2 years.

SAD is diagnosed in women four times more often than men and more frequently in younger adults than older adults. Having depression or bipolar disorder is a risk factor because symptoms can worsen seasonally. People with SAD may overproduce the hormone melatonin, increasing sleepiness, as darkness increases and winter days become shorter. Serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects mood, can drop in response to reduced sunlight and trigger depression. Vitamin D deficiency can be associated with depression symptoms, too, resulting from little exposure to sunlight and low dietary intake.

There are four main treatments for SAD. Antidepressant medication SSRI's may help treat SAD, sometimes starting before symptoms typically begin. It can take several weeks to experience full benefits and treatment might be continued beyond when symptoms normally go away. Psychotherapy, or talk therapy, can help you learn how to manage



stress, reduce avoidance behavior and change negative thoughts and behaviors that may be making you feel worse.

Light therapy, or phototherapy, has long been used and causes a change in brain chemicals linked to mood by mimicking natural outdoor light. Symptoms may be relieved by sitting in front of a light box first thing in the morning, for 20-60 minutes at exposure to 10,000 lux of cool-white fluorescent light—about 20 times greater than typical indoor lighting.

Some studies show vitamin D supplementation as effective as light therapy, but others showed it had no effect. Vitamin D deficiency should be treated as your doctor recommends.

Exercising regularly, getting outside even on cold or cloudy days and making your home sunnier and brighter are good additions to treating SAD. *Source NIMH & Mayo Clinic.*



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Wassail, from the phrase “waes hael” meaning “good health” is a warm, mulled drink perfect for celebrating the holidays.

In a slow cooker, combine ingredients and warm on low for 6-8 hours:

- 4c apple cider
- 4c fresh orange juice
- 3c cranberry juice
- 3 cinnamon sticks
- 2 fresh ginger pieces
- 2 tsp whole cloves
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 1 orange, sliced
- 1/3c brown sugar