

# Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

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# Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

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# Winter Blues, Winter Blahs



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Common Symptoms of Depression
Fatigue
Anxious or slowed down
Crying spells
Depressed mood
Irritability
Trouble concentrating
Loss of interest or pleasure (including things other than sex)
Sleep changes
Appetite changes
Suicidal thoughts (when severe)
Low self-esteem or guilt

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Common Symptoms of Winter SAD	Common Symptoms of Depression
Tiredness/fatigue	Fatigue
Anxiety	Anxious or slowed down
Crying spells	Crying spells
Depression	Depressed mood
Irritability	Irritability
Trouble concentrating	Trouble concentrating
Body aches	
Loss of sex drive	Loss of interest or pleasure (including things other than sex)
Poor sleep	Sleep changes
Decreased activity level	
Overeating (especially carbs, associated with weight gain)	Appetite changes
Suicidal thoughts (when severe)	Suicidal thoughts (when severe)
	Low self-esteem or guilt

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder?

- Type of depression that usually occurs when hours of daylight gets less
- Less often, happens in the summer
- Some people have both winter and summer SAD



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Who is at risk

- Usually starts about age 20
- More common in women than men



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

What causes SAD ?

In normal hours of daylight (bright light exposure) this is what should happen:

Tryptophan → 5HTP → Serotonin → Pineal with bright light exposure → ↓Melatonin

Melatonin should be highest in the middle of sleep episode. In SAD it is usually highest in the daytime!

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

What causes SAD ?

The complexity:

- Serotonin leads to melatonin
- And elevated melatonin has depleted serotonin and vitamin D concurrently

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### Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Treatments

- Phototherapy (natural, artificial, sunrise therapy)
- Vitamin D3
- Melatonin
- Negative air ionization
- Herbal preparations
- Aromatherapy
- Prescription SSRI

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### Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Natural Phototherapy

- Natural light can be used if it is **bright**
- Must be at least 30 minutes per day, when the sun is the strongest (typically between 11 AM – 1 PM)
- This signals pineal to reduce melatonin production right away, allows serotonin levels to build until light gets dim

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### Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Natural Phototherapy

Sunlight also enables body to create vitamin D  
Open the curtains, put up the shades, let the sunshine in!  
For lowest periods serious intervention needed – Hawaii here we come!

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### Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Artificial Phototherapy

- Light boxes - [www.northernlighttechnologies.com](http://www.northernlighttechnologies.com)



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### Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Artificial Phototherapy

- Light is about 25 times brighter than normal room light, does not need to be daylight
- Typically used for at least 30 minutes per day within the first 90 minutes of getting out of bed
- Timing is individual

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### Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Phototherapy

- Common side effects from artificial phototherapy
  - Irritability
  - Insomnia
  - Headache
  - Eyestrain

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Sunrise clock



[www.northernlighttechnologies.com](http://www.northernlighttechnologies.com)

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Vitamin D3

- D3 manufactured in body after direct skin exposure to sun.
- Takes 6 hours after exposure to make and absorb D3.
- Supplements available, most MDs recommend 2,000-4,000 mg per day

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Vitamin D3

- Functions as a hormone
- Has major roles in converting amino acids to neurotransmitters (e.g. Tryptophan to serotonin, tyrosine to dopamine and norepinephrine)

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

**Vitamin D3**



Studies have tested doses ranging from 400 iu – 4000 iu. Higher doses seem more effective. 4000 iu created no negative side effects in the study group.

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Melatonin

- Gives body signal to sleep.
- Highest concentrations during deepest sleep

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Melatonin



Studies using dosages of .5 – 5 mg have reported benefits

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Negative Air Ionization

- Higher negative ion concentration in warmer weather/summer
- Has been shown as effective as other therapies, although is less well known
- High density generators (2.7 million ions per cc) most effective
- No reported side effects

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Herbal preparations

St. John's Wort

- Successful in about 50% of cases



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## Fight the Winter Blues and Win!

Herbal preparations

Omega 3 fatty acids

- Needed to make serotonin and dopamine



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Herbal preparations

5-HTP

- Direct precursor to serotonin
- Made from tryptophan



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Herbal preparations

SAMe

- Active form of methionine
- Raises levels of dopamine, norepinephrine, less effect on serotonin



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Herbal preparations

Highest concentration of serotonin receptors is in intestinal tract!

Probiotics

- Dairy free probiotic to support intestinal flora and aid in intestinal health



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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Aromatherapy

Symptoms	Essential Oil	
Sleep problems	Bergamot Roman chamomile Lavender Lemon	Sweet majoram Neroli Sweet orange Sandalwood
Irritability	Frankincense Geranium Lavender	Neroli Ylang ylang
Reduced sex drive	Jasmin Neroli Peppermint	Rose Sandalwood Ylang ylang
Lethargy/fatigue	Bergamot Grapefruit	Lemon Peppermint
Leadens paralysis (heavy limbs)	Grapefruit Geranium	Sweet orange Tangerine

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Prescription medications

- SSRI (selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors)
  - > Fluoxetine (Prozac)
  - > Sertraline (Zoloft)
  - > Paroxetine (Paxil)
  - > Citalopram (Celexa)

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

Prescription medications – common side effects of SSRIs

- Insomnia
- Nausea
- Diarrhea
- Decreased sex drive or performance

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## Winter Blues, Winter Blahs

### Summary

Research shows the best way to fight the battle

- Light therapy of some kind plus
- One supplement (melatonin or D3 show the best promise)

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