



The Mental Health Association Presents:

WELLNESS WEDNESDAY

Information and tips to help promote your mental wellness

When It Is More Than The Winter Blues

We have reached that great time of the year when we wonder if winter will ever end. For those of us who are not skiers, the winter blues is usually something that we just endure knowing that better times are coming. However if you find that you experience increased levels of depression, difficulty in sleeping, become irritable or gain weight from the starchy or sweet foods you crave, you may be suffering from Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD is a mood disorder that is related to seasonal variations of light. SAD affects half a million people every winter between September and April, peaking in December, January and February. SAD occurs in both the northern and southern hemispheres but is extremely rare in individuals living within 30 degrees latitude of the equator. It is believed that the seasonal changes in light may affect humans by shifting our "biological internal clocks" or circadian rhythm. This can cause our biological clocks to be out of step with our daily schedules. Also melatonin, a sleep related hormone, has been linked to increased levels of depression. Melatonin is produced at increased levels in the dark so when the days are shorter and darker, the production of the hormone increases. What differentiates SAD from other mood disorders is that the symptoms go into complete remission in the spring and summer months.

Taking everything into account, that means that Rochester is a prime location for one to develop Seasonal Affective Disorder. However, there are a number of ways you can help yourself, if you believe you suffer from SAD.

- Get outside in the sunshine for 15 - 30 minutes a day.
- Open your curtains or blinds to let in more light.
- Move furniture to maximize the light exposure in your house or office.

Consult a health care professional for light therapy or phototherapy. Light

therapy has been shown to suppress the brain's secretion of melatonin and has been effective in up to 85% of diagnosed cases. Patients remain in light up to ten times the intensity of normal domestic lighting for up to four hours a day, but may carry on normal activities such as eating or reading while undergoing treatment.

If none of these approaches work, you may want to contact your family doctor or mental health professional to discuss your symptoms and other types of treatment.

For additional information, visit the Society for Light Treatment and Biological Rhythm at www.websciences.org/sltbr

You can also learn more at The SAD Association Homepage at www.sada.org.uk

For information on local resources, visit the Mental Health Association website at www.mharochester.org



The Mental Health Association helps people find the tools and resources that they need to achieve and maintain mental wellness.

We believe that mental health affects us all and achieving mental wellness requires work, time and support. We promote mental wellness in our community through educational programming, referral services and individualized support. We can help you find help. [Visit our website to find a location near you](#) or call us at 585.325.3145.

Sign up below to receive updates about programs and information on achieving and maintaining mental wellness.

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