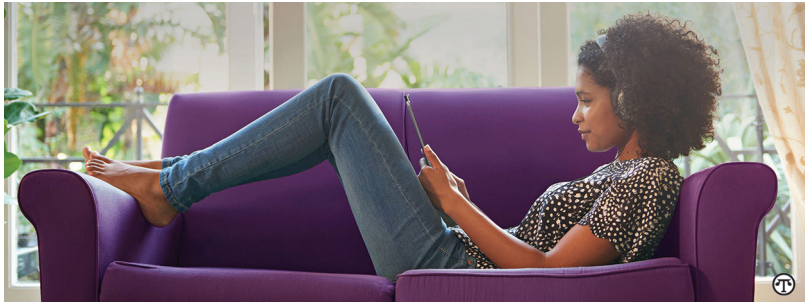


Health And Well-Being

If You're Feeling Down, You're Not Alone. It's That Time of Year



You don't have to let the dark days of winter get you down. Learn how to beat the blues and when to recognize it's time to seek help.

(NAPS)—You may have heard the terms—winter blues, Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern. No matter what you call it, with approximately 17.3 million adults in the U.S. experiencing seasonal depression, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, feeling gloomy this time of year isn't uncommon—but it can be overcome.

The Problem

Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern (formerly called SAD) can affect anyone of any age. Whether you're a student returning to class, a busy working professional who's always playing catchup, or even newly retired with found time on your hands, the excitement of the holidays is long over and wintry dark days are here. While January and February are the typical peak months for the disorder, symptoms can persist through April, according to Mental Health America.

Doctor's Advice

When that feeling of sadness persists for several weeks, it's time to take action, according to Dr. Desreen Dudley, a licensed Clinical Psychologist and Behavioral Health Provider of Therapeutic Services for Teladoc Health. But, she points out, often the toughest thing for many is how to discern whether what they feel is temporary or something more serious.

"If someone has a few days of feeling low, that's normal and typically nothing to worry about. It's when the feeling lingers for weeks and people lose interest in daily activities and suffer persistent negative thoughts, that lend a stronger basis for Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Affective Pattern diagnosis," she says.

What To Watch For

Other symptoms she warns about are:

- Change in appetite
- Change in sleep pattern
- Decreased energy
- Decreased concentration
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- An inability to think, concentrate, or finish tasks at work or school
- Thinking about suicide, self-harm, or death

Dr. Dudley contends individuals already struggling with depressive disorders are susceptible to SAD patterns. For older Americans, a Vitamin D deficiency can exacerbate low moods. On the other end of the spectrum, she has worked with newly independent college students who find SAD a heavy burden and say their new responsibilities of classes, exams and jobs can compound their depression. For some, not rising as early for classes as they did in high school means sleeping in more and further limiting their exposure to sunlight.

What To Do

In addition to considering therapy, such as virtual care, which is available on your terms and from any location you choose, Dr. Dudley recommends:

- Avoiding or cutting back on alcohol and other addictive substances
- Eating healthfully—more lean proteins, fruits and vegetables, and eliminating sugar
- Daily exercise at least 30 minute a day (walking counts)
- Yoga or meditation
- Learning about and trying light therapy
- Regularly surrounding yourself with those you enjoy being around.

When To Seek Help

According to a recent global study conducted by Ipsos MORI for Teladoc Health, individuals often recognize when they're struggling, but even so, over a third of the respondents who have had one mental health episode admitted to not seeking professional help. The reason? For many, it's often the difficulty in finding mental health care.

"Thankfully, virtual care is becoming increasingly available as a source of convenient mental health care," Dr. Dudley says. "It eliminates the traditional obstacles of in-person visits and has opened up access for anyone with a busy schedule, individuals who may have difficulty getting out of the house and students who may fear the stigma of walking into the campus mental health clinic."

Learn More

For further information, visit www.Teladoc.com/therapy.