

MENTAL HEALTH

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Minute

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Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

Treatment & risk factors

Have you ever noticed that on a cold and cloudy day you feel gloomy and sad, but on a warm and sunny day you feel upbeat and energized? It turns out that there is a scientific explanation for this and it is often referred to as seasonal depression or seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD is a form of depression that occurs in individuals during the fall and winter months. Individuals who experience SAD often feel more moody and lack the energy they had during the summer months. In some cases, individuals can experience seasonal affective disorder during the onset of spring or summer.

Other symptoms of SAD or winter depression could include **increased appetite, irritability, oversleeping and weight gain**. Seasonal affective disorder is a treatable illness. Psychotherapy, medications and phototherapy are a few treatment options that can help ease the symptoms of seasonal affective disorder. Phototherapy treatment is the administration of bright light, often ultraviolet light, to help normalize the body's circadian (daily) rhythm. Circadian rhythm is the name given to our "internal body clock" that regulates the 24 hour cycle of our biochemical, physiological and behavioral processes.

The cause of seasonal affective disorder could be a number of things. Some possible contributing factors could include changes in melatonin and serotonin levels in the body. **A change in season can influence the balance of the natural hormone melatonin**. Likewise, a change in sunlight exposure can change serotonin levels in the body. Reduced sunlight can cause a drop in serotonin, possibly leading to depression.

Some potential risk factors for developing seasonal affective disorder include:

- **Geographic location.** If you live further away from the equator, you are more likely to develop seasonal affective disorder.
- **Female.** Some studies reveal that there are more diagnosed cases of seasonal affective disorder in women than in men. Men who are diagnosed, however, tend to exhibit symptoms that are more severe.
- **Family history.** Similar to other depressive disorders, studies indicate that a family history of seasonal affective disorder can increase one's chances of developing the disorder.

It's normal to feel sad some days. If you are feeling sad for several days at a time and find it difficult to accomplish daily tasks of living, see your doctor. This is especially important if you are having thoughts of suicide.

Supporting article at: <http://www.webmd.com/depression/tc/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad-topic-overview>

Can A BAD Economy Really Lead to Depression?

Although it may be surprising, the medical answer is actually **yes**. A prolonged 'down' economy can lead to clinical depression in two distinct ways; and while some groups are at a higher risk of developing depression than others, the condition can affect anyone at any point in their lives.

We all know that unemployment is at record highs all across the county, and studies have shown that **job loss is a leading contributor to depression**. When someone loses their job their self-esteem can be dealt a significant blow. In a bad economy it can take more time to find a new job and people are sometimes forced into positions they are overqualified for. All of that can add up to one hefty loss of self-esteem, which can in turn trigger the onset of clinical depression.

The second, more surprising link between the economy and depression is health. It should come as no surprise that conditions like hypertension and diabetes can be worsened by the stress of a bad economy, and both can lead to depression. What is surprising, though, is the link between the two conditions and depression. Over time, both **diabetes and hypertension damage the vasculature of the brain**, and research has shown that the damage can contribute to the onset of clinical depression...

Akbar Gilani, MD
Eden Medical Center

Current Events At The Senior Care Unit

Just a reminder, the Senior Care Unit offers FREE training. Great opportunity for staff meetings, family education, or patient/resident education, to schedule just call Melody or Jane at (575) 736-8175.

Also don't forget about the new direct referral line

(877) 246-5074!



Holiday Fun

Family traditions

"I can recall several family traditions growing up and oftentimes those traditions surrounded a holiday season such as Halloween, Thanksgiving or Christmas. Whatever the event, spending time with family and creating long lasting memories is priceless.

One family tradition I treasure and plan to continue with my own family is the tradition of gathering around the dinner table on Christmas Eve night for a candlelight dinner. There are slight variations to the menu, but it mostly remains the same: rib eye steak, sautéed mushrooms, funeral potatoes and a drink we like to call 'slush'. We talk about the importance of family and the meaning of Christmas. Another family tradition I enjoy is at thanksgiving. During the thanksgiving feast, we go around the room and each person is encouraged to share with the group something they are thankful for. I used to think this tradition was kind of cheesy, but it is now a tradition I fully embrace.

There are many different kinds of family traditions. Family traditions are important and can bring a family closer together. During this time of year remember to continue your own family traditions."

Anonymous

Did You Know...

Researchers estimate that between 2% to 6% of Americans suffer from moderate to severe Seasonal Affective Disorder