



# Natural Remedies for Seasonal Affective Disorder

by Melissa Gallagher

According to the American Academy of Family Physicians, more than half a million people in the United States may experience varying forms and levels of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a mood disorder also known as winter depression. More than 10 percent of these individuals live in the Northeast.

**F**or the one in five northern residents who suffer from SAD, the switch to Daylight Savings Time signals the onset of symptoms such as mild depression, seasonal weight gain, listlessness, difficulty waking up in the morning, a decrease in libido and premature bone loss.

The root source of SAD is a chemical imbalance in the brain, specifically within the hypothalamus, which responds to day length to regulate the body's circadian (24-hour) and seasonal rhythms. In the fall and winter months, the brain produces more melatonin—a regulatory chemical that adjusts sleep patterns—than serotonin, a neurotransmitter that affects the modulation of anger, aggression, sexuality, appetite and metabolism. During these months of less daylight, serotonin reaches its lowest levels in the brain and the production of vitamin D slumps. The chemical imbalances that accompany shorter days instill a sense of foreboding, unease and mild depression that is often hard to shake.

One of the more popular remedies for individuals who suffer from winter blues is the use of light therapy. Full-spectrum, “happy lamps” emit natural light similar to that from the sun, minus the harmful ultraviolet rays, UVA and UVB, that are linked to skin cancer, advanced skin aging, skin spots and potential eye damage.

Often, sufferers find changes in diet, exercise and supplementation to be equally effective in combating SAD and minimizing its symptoms. A low-fat, low-carbohydrate diet, rich in leafy greens and lean proteins, can help, along with moderate daily exercise and supplementation with Vitamin D, a B-vitamin complex and 5-HTP. A naturally occurring amino acid and a precursor to serotonin, 5-HTP helps balance levels of serotonin and melatonin. Together, these supplements act to increase energy and regulate sleep patterns.

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The darker, shorter days can now represent a consistent flow of happiness and contentment with these slight changes. So schedule some social occasions and take full advantage of the holidays and all the good times the winter season has to offer.

*Melissa Gallagher is the creator of Sunshine in a Box, a natural remedy for SAD, which was recently featured on CNN Accent Health News. For more information call 727-954-8968 or visit [HealthyBeingProducts.com/sad.html](http://HealthyBeingProducts.com/sad.html).*

