

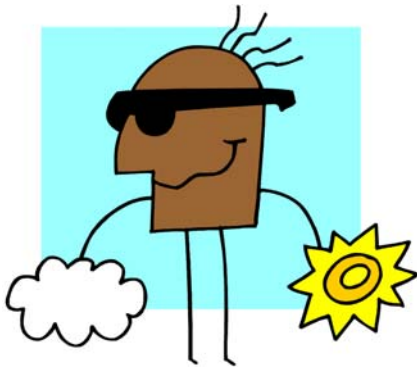
# OPTIMAL HEALTH UNIVERSITY™

Presented by Robert Grace, DC & Jared Wiskind, DC

## Natural Solutions for Seasonal Affective Disorder

*Do the cold days of winter leave you feeling as dark as a midwinter evening? There may be a good reason. For many individuals, the shorter hours of daylight during fall and winter months cause a form of depression called seasonal affective disorder (SAD).*

*Your doctor at Duluth MultiCare wants patients to know that SAD is a common condition that can often be managed by a combination of natural therapies and lifestyle modifications. Read on to learn how you or someone you care about can maintain emotional well-being all winter long.*



### Symptoms of SAD

Like other types of depression, SAD leads to trouble sleeping, anxiety, social withdrawal, feelings of helplessness, lack of energy, appetite changes, and difficulty concentrating.

### The Connection Between Body, Mind and Spirit

One of the guiding principles of chiropractic is that the body, mind and spirit are connected, and influence each other. Although chiropractors don't treat psychological problems, patients often report that chiropractic care helps alleviate not only physical ailments but mental and emotional problems as well.

Chiropractors, like your doctor at Duluth MultiCare, focus on correcting

dysfunctional areas in the spine called **vertebral subluxations**.

Your doctor at Duluth MultiCare removes vertebral subluxations with gentle and effective maneuvers called **chiropractic adjustments**. Research indicates adjustments that correct misalignment in the upper neck (cervical spine), reduce symptoms of depression (*JVSR* 2005;11:1-4).

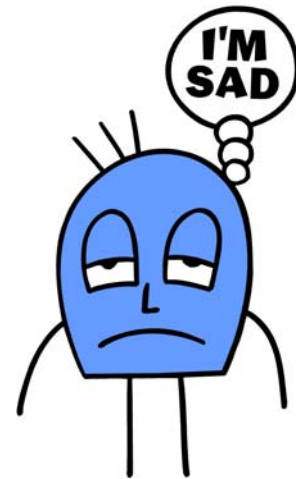
### See the Light

Because SAD is triggered by shorter hours of daylight during the fall and winter, many patients find relief from light therapy. Light therapy owes its popularity to its ease of use and lack of side effects as well as its proven efficacy.

For those with mild symptoms, simply spending time every day outside in sunlight can do the trick. Others may require daily sessions in front of a special fluorescent lamp designed for this purpose (*J Clin Psychiatry* 2002; 63:316-21).

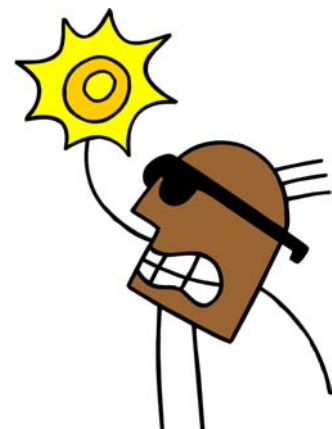
### Enjoy Regular Exercise

Your doctor at Duluth MultiCare recommends regular exercise not only to maintain optimal physical health but also to reduce anxiety and stress. Like



other forms of depression, SAD may be diminished with exercise (*J Clin Psychiatry* 2002; 63:316-21). In fact, research indicates that seasonal depression responds to exercise as well as it does to light therapy (*Psychiatry Res* 2000;94:29-42).

If regular physical activity is not already a part of your routine, start with a daily walk outdoors and enjoy the added benefit of sunlight's mood-lifting power. Also remember to see your doctor at Duluth MultiCare regularly. Chiropractic adjustments ward off sports injuries — and keep joints and muscles at peak performance.



**Robert Grace, DC & Jared Wiskind, DC, Duluth MultiCare, Inc. (770) 497-9700  
3170 Peachtree Industrial Boulevard, Suite 170, Duluth, GA 30097  
www.duluthmulticare.com**

## Increase Vitamin D

Recent research suggests that vitamin D, a nutrient necessary for absorption of calcium and phosphorus, may counteract SAD. Vitamin D deficiency has been linked to several nervous system disorders, including SAD (*Psychoneuroendocrinology* 2009 Epub).



The body synthesizes vitamin D through exposure to the ultraviolet rays of the sun. Reduced hours of sunlight make vitamin D deficiency more common during winter months (*J Psychiatry Neurosci* 2009;34:3).

Vitamin D may also be obtained through certain foods. The best natural sources for vitamin D include fatty fish such as herring, catfish, salmon, mackerel, sardines, tuna and eel. Another potent source is cod liver oil. Smaller amounts of vitamin D are present in eggs and liver.

Vitamin D supplements are also available. Talk to the doctor about whether this option is right for you.

## Mellow out with Melatonin

Melatonin is a hormone produced in the brain in response to the light and darkness cycles of day and night. It regulates the normal sleep cycle, which may be interrupted in individuals suffering from SAD.

Melatonin supplements taken at specific times of the day may be an effective treatment for SAD, especially when used in combination with light therapy. Melatonin may cause adverse reactions in some individuals, so ask

the doctor if melatonin supplementation is right for you (*Proc Natl Acad Sci USA* 2006).

## Try St. John's Wort

St. John's wort is an herb that has been used for centuries to treat a variety of mental disorders including anxiety and depression. Preliminary research also shows the plant's promise for treating SAD (*J Altern Complement Med* 2009;15:827-36). Like other herbal remedies, it can cause side effects and drug interactions in some individuals, so talk to the doctor before beginning a regimen of St. John's wort.

## Spice Things up with Turmeric

Turmeric, a spice popular in many curry dishes, has a long history of use in both traditional Chinese and Indian Ayurvedic medicine to treat a vast array of conditions — from stress and depression to cuts and burns. Turmeric gets its characteristic bright yellow color from curcumin, a powerful antioxidant, anti-inflammatory chemical currently being studied in the West for use to fight cancer and Alzheimer's disease.

Curcumin also shows promise as a natural antidepressant, especially when used in combination with piperine, a component of black pepper (*Psychopharmacology [Berl]* 2008; 201:435-42). While therapeutic use of curcumin is still under investigation, an extra helping of curry is a tasty remedy worth trying in the fight against SAD. Turmeric and curcumin are also available in supplement form. Ask the doctor if turmeric is recommended for your specific situation.

## Consider Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

When self-treatment of SAD is not enough, cognitive behavioral therapy can be a valuable tool. In this type of counseling, therapists work with patients to change thought patterns and behaviors. Cognitive behavioral therapy has consistently proven effective in reducing symptoms of various types of depression, including SAD

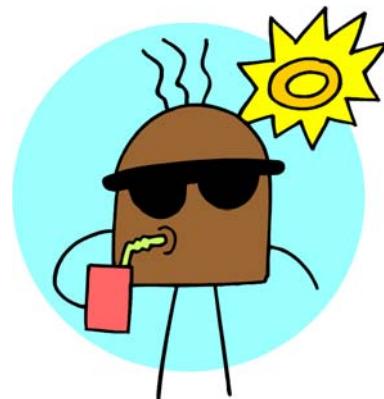
(*Psychol Med* 2010;40:9-24; *Behav Ther* 2009;40:225-38). Ask the doctor for a referral for a local cognitive behavioral therapist.

## Know When You Need More Help

While many of the techniques described here allow for self-treatment of SAD, remember that depression is a serious condition that should be discussed with a healthcare professional. Depression can also be a sign of an underlying medical condition. If you have thoughts of self-harm or suicide, seek help immediately.

## Make a Plan

As you can see, there are a variety of options to choose from to manage SAD holistically. A proactive approach to your optimal emotional health starts with making a plan for care. Our chiropractic office is here to help you find the resources you need. And, to learn more about the connection between body, mind and spirit, schedule an appointment for a chiropractic evaluation today!



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