

October 6, 2022

Mental Illness Awareness Week: October 2-8, 2022
Beyond the Blues: Seasonal Affective Disorder



Seasonal Affective Disorder is a recurrent type of depression that is linked to the change in seasons.

While many people feel less energetic when the days get shorter in the fall, Seasonal Affective Disorder is more than just the blues.

“Seasonal Affective Disorder or ‘SAD’ is a recurrent type of depression that’s linked to the change in seasons,” explained Jamie Benner, Program Manager for Salem Regional Medical Center’s (SRMC) Behavioral Medicine and Wellness Center. “Symptoms of SAD most often occur during the fall and winter months, when there is less daylight and colder temperatures, and resolve by spring and summer.”

Symptoms of SAD can interfere with everyday life and may include:

- Feeling depressed on most days
- A disruption in "normal" activity that affects work and interpersonal relationships
- Inability to enjoy life or feel pleasure
- Listlessness
- Having problems with sleep
- Overeating, with a craving for carbohydrates
- Thoughts of suicide or personal harm (seek help immediately)

“While anyone can get SAD, it is more common in women, those living farther north and people with other mood disorders like clinical depression. The exact causes of SAD are unknown, though it’s thought that shorter days and longer hours of darkness may trigger chemical changes in the brain that lead to depression.”

Treatment for SAD

“If you or a loved one experiences significant changes in your mood and behavior whenever the seasons change, you should speak to a physician or trained mental health professional,” Benner advised. “There are several treatment options available for SAD, including light therapy, counseling and medication.”

People with SAD can also take steps to help manage their symptoms, including:

- Spending more time outside or in brightly lit spaces
- Exercising regularly
- Eating a healthy diet
- Connecting with family and friends

About SRMC's Behavioral Medicine and Wellness Center

SRMC's Behavioral Medicine and Wellness Center (BMWC) offers intensive outpatient programs for adults facing a range of mental health conditions, including depression; anxiety; mood changes; and grief, loss and trauma. The BMWC is located at 2020 East State Street, Suite J, in Salem, 330-337-4935.