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I love the new me!

Why *Strictly Come Dancing* star

Zoe Ball is happier and wiser

Don't be SAD!

How to avoid the Winter blues

14 pages of luscious lingerie inside

Plus:

Roger Bamber • Abi Titmuss
The Mayor • Michelle Collins



Seagulls' stadium
How we won the battle



Reviewed
Yo! Sushi and Sapporo



S.A.D.

Seasonal Affective Disorder can turn these dark, short days into a nightmare for up to one in five of us. Here's how to avoid the gloom and get through the Winter months smiling

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THIS may be the season of joy and goodwill, yet for many people Christmas and the New Year celebrations bring with them a feeling of dread.

Countless individuals are affected by low moods, a lack of energy and feelings of hopelessness. Christmas is a delight to some but can be one of the hardest times of year for others, especially the fall-out in January. Lost loved ones are missed and feelings of loneliness thrive. This sadness can be transient, lasting a few days or can linger, indicating more serious signs of depression. As many as 20% of women will experience depression at some point during their lives – and women are twice as likely as men to suffer. There are many causes and types of depression, all needing to be dealt with sympathetically and individually. Causes of depression run from loneliness, job loss or life dissatisfaction, others may be from past traumatic events. Some cases are associated with SAD – Seasonal Affective Disorder – and other types of depression can be due to biochemical imbalances in the brain. Sometimes however there is no known cause.

Sadly, there is still a great deal of stigma attached to depression. People that have never experienced the horrors of depression may offer advice such as, "Pull yourself together," or from the even less sensitive, "Get a grip". Not only does this increase feelings of helplessness, but it also adds to feelings of guilt at being 'useless'. As if depression isn't enough to deal with.

One way that people can begin to help themselves is to talk to their doctor about counselling. Another neglected but very important piece of the jigsaw of happiness is eating properly. At times of lost appetite or





carbohydrates craving this is hard to do, yet with a little effort, making the right choices can influence the way your brain works.

Eat well

The protein in our diet provides building blocks for some of the chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, in the brain. A deficiency or imbalance in some particular neurotransmitters can lead to depression. One of these messengers is called serotonin, which you probably have all heard of by now, and has a mood elevating action. It's derived

from tryptophan, a component found in turkey, beans, chicken, cottage cheese, avocado and bananas.

Adrenaline, another neurotransmitter, is needed for drive, keeping us alert, motivated and able to think and act quickly. This is derived from tyrosine, which is found in fish, eggs, nuts, avocados and bananas. Many anti-depressant drugs work by affecting the balance of these chemicals. The nutritional approach is to supply the body with the correct raw materials to make more of these mood-enhancing neurotransmitters.

As the brain is made up of 60% fat, which helps the good mood messages to be sent and received, it makes sense to get

enough of the right kind of fats that enhance this action. You can do this by eating oily fish such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, herrings and fresh tuna three times a week or by eating a mix of seeds daily, making sure to include linseeds.

Other nutrients that help messages to travel across the brain and enhance mood in other ways are folic acid and vitamin B6. These can be found in dark green leafy vegetables – kale, broccoli, spinach, lentils, sunflower seeds, chick peas, avocados, hazelnuts, and black eye peas.

Food allergies can also cause depression and mental health problems. Two in every ten people now have a food allergy, at least ►



some of which will translate into depression. The main culprits, but by no means the only ones, are dairy produce, wheat, chocolate, cane sugar and eggs.

Exercise is also beneficial. In trials it has been shown to be more effective than taking anti-depressants. Aim for a brisk walk five times a week.

What is SAD?

30-35% of the UK population suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder – the winter months of December, January and February producing the most instances. In severe cases, symptoms often match those of depression with crying, inability to cope and feelings of despair and hopelessness, lack of libido and anxiety.

In milder cases of SAD where severe symptoms are not apparent, the clues lie in low moods coming on generally as the clocks turn back and days are short and dull. A change in appetite, leaning more towards carbohydrate-rich and sugary foods is often seen as are increased social problems, such

as not wanting to go out and see people. A greater need for sleep that is non-restorative, along with an increased sensitivity to pain are common as are worsened menstrual problems, although SAD is by no means a female problem.

Try light therapy

It has been found that between 75-85% of people suffering from SAD feel better after three or four days of consistent light therapy, which is very simply controlled exposure to certain types of light. Some individuals feel better immediately after their first dose, even within twenty minutes of exposure, while others may need several days. Normal light bulbs don't do the trick, as they don't produce enough light. Specially designed light boxes delivering the necessary intensity and quality of light – up to 10,000 lux can be used for approximately thirty minutes each day depending on the individual and can have positive effects on this condition. For info and to order light boxes try www.outsidein.co.uk or www.seasonal-affective-disorder.co.uk.

“ Sadly, there is still a great deal of stigma attached to depression. Sufferers are often ridiculed and thought of as weak-willed and feeble ”



You are not alone

These are three women whose lives have been affected by depression.

Sarah's story

For Sarah, 34, Christmas brought with it many problems. "I dreaded Christmas, but also New Year. Both were an incredibly difficult time for me. Shops full of couples all busy buying presents made me feel lonely and envious of their planned day of festivities. Before I got some help I often spent Christmas crying on my own, feeling worthless, lonely and unloved wondering what to do with myself on this terrible day. Now thankfully after professional counselling and support and making some lifestyle changes Christmas is no longer the nightmare that it once was."

Julie's story

Julie is a 25 year old female. She breaks down in tears for no reason and is irritable with her three year old. She is having trouble sleeping, has no appetite and feels like she just can't cope anymore. She admits that she feels guilty for not feeling happy. She is currently attending sessions with a psychologist after attempting suicide and she is beginning to take a little more care of herself by trying to eat properly and get a little exercise in each day. At the moment though, it really is one day at a time.

Theresa's story

"On summer solstice the only thing I used to focus on was the fact that the nights were now going to get shorter. As soon as the clocks went back I used to start to feel down. In winter I tended to sleep more and eat more carbohydrates, and by November I used to be cancelling engagements, losing interest in going out

and meeting my friends. My libido was almost non-existent. January and February were my worst months. I would worry about small things I wouldn't have given a second thought to in summer. I'd procrastinate about work and often call in sick, as I just didn't feel up to it, and would often have tearful days as well, nothing anyone said to cheer me up made any difference. Come April my mood was beginning to lift and by June I was back to my own self, full of energy and enthusiasm and raring to go. I couldn't find enough hours in the day to do everything I wanted. When I first read about Seasonal Affective Disorder a bell went off and I realised they were talking about me. I have since been using a light box with astounding results and would recommend it to anybody, at least to give it a try—anything has to be better than being surrounded in the gloom and despondency that I used to feel during winter."



“ In severe cases of SAD, symptoms often match those of depression with crying, inability to cope and feelings of despair and hopelessness ”

Where to get help

Should you feel that you are suffering from depression or SAD don't suffer in isolation. Please seek some help.

Samaritans

The Samaritans are available 24 hours a day, ready to listen confidentially. Call their national number on 08457 90 90 90 or their local Brighton number 01273 772277.

Counselling

Counsellors can be recommended by your doctor or through many private counselling services. Although they can seem expensive some offer a bursary where reduced payments are an option. One such clinic is the Gateway clinic in

Hove, they can be contacted on 087 242 1364. www.gatewayclinics.co.uk

Relate

If it's family stuff that's bothering you try Relate, who have a new family counselling service. 01273 697997.

Mind

Other places to go for help are the association Mind, contactable on 0845 7660163.

Threshold

Threshold is a women-only counselling and drop-in centre and can be contacted on 01273 622886. They also have an information freephone line on 0800 808 6000.