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Seasonal Affective Disorder

Do you find yourself changing color just like the seasons, a shade of blue perhaps?

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is sometimes also called the Winter Blues or Summer Depression. SAD is a mood disorder. SAD can affect people that have normal moods for most of the year except depression symptoms during the same time of the year, for example in the fall or winter, each year.



The most common season people in Canada suffer is winter. As with other types of depression there are many symptoms and no two cases are exactly alike.

Patients may report feelings such as sleep interruptions, hopelessness, loss of interest, thoughts of self-harm and difficulty making decisions

Other symptoms specific to winter SAD are trouble waking up in the morning, agitation, and overeating, whereas Insomnia is more associated with spring or summer SAD.

Diagnosis of SAD must include the exhibition of a pattern of symptoms for a period of over 2 years during the same season.

The most common theory regarding the cause of SAD links the lack of sunlight during our seasons. A decrease in sunlight can cause the brain to increase its production of melatonin; a common supplement people use as a sleep aid. Less sunlight may also cause a decrease in the production of the mood regulator known as Serotonin.

Many treatments are available for SAD; light therapy being one of the most common and easily available. Light therapy in combination with medication, exercise and supplement therapies are used to treat SAD. Please consult your physician prior to starting any new medications.

As with any chronic disease decreasing episodes and possible prevention is key. Some things to aware of are:

- Daily exercise
- Seeking sunlight when you can
- Be aware of you moods
- Decrease stress

More women than men are diagnosed with SAD in Canada with 2-3% of Canada's population affected by it

As we all know with fall and winter comes holidays and the STRESS that go along with them. Remember to try and plan ahead when possible, set a realistic perspective, ask for help and most important let yourself enjoy the season.

Reach out to me, your PCN nurse for more ideas, tips and support regarding Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Be well,

Vanessa