

Tip Sheet :

Seasonal Affective Disorder

It is common to be affected by changing seasons and weather, or to have times of year when you feel more or less comfortable. For example, you might find that your mood or energy levels drop when it gets colder or warmer or notice changes in your sleeping or eating patterns. But if your feelings are interfering with your day to day life, it could be a sign that you have depression – and if they keep coming back at the same time of year, doctors might call this seasonal affective disorder or 'seasonal depression'.

Here are our top tips on ways to manage if you have SAD.

1. **Get natural sunlight.** It's important for our health that we get natural sunlight. Making sure we open the curtains each day, sitting by a window and taking time to go out on a daily walk and breathing in the fresh air can really boost your overall well-being. You may like to try one of our Walking for Health walks.
2. **Connect with others.** Spending time with others is vital for our well-being. The happiness we get from spending time with good friends or being part of group we enjoy helps our brain to release endorphins! From text messages, video calling and sending cards in the post try to find creative ways of connecting with others. You may want to try our drop-in group.
3. **Try some relaxation techniques.** Learning to relax can help you look after your wellbeing when you are feeling stressed, anxious or busy. See our pages on relaxation for tips you could try or see our information on mindfulness.
4. **Plan ahead for winter.** For example, try to make meals in advance and freeze them if you know you are likely to lack the energy to do this during the most difficult period.
5. **Keep a diary.** You might find it helps to keep a note of your symptoms, including when they start and if particular things seem to trigger them, including changes in the weather. This could help you notice any patterns. You could also make a note of things that feel helpful for you or which seem to make things worse. This can be helpful because SAD affects you at some times and not others, so you might not easily remember these details.

6. Think about your diet. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels. See our pages on food and mood for more tips.

7. Keep active. If you find exercise a challenge remember that even gentle activities like Pilates, swimming or walking can be a big boost to your mood. See our pages on physical for more information.

8. Self care. Schedule in time for you during your week to self care. It's not just about doing things you enjoy but giving yourself time to recharge your batteries and being kind to our own self just as we would do with a friend. Visit our self care page for our inspirational tips.