



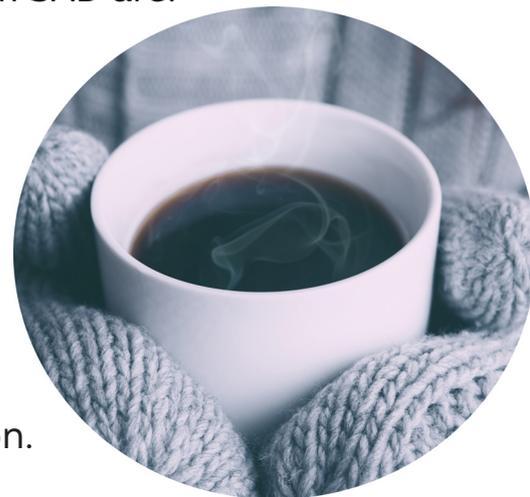
# Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a form of low mood that affects some people during the winter months, particularly during the December, January and February. One hypothesised cause is a biochemical imbalance in the brain with the reduction of sunlight and daylight hours also being implicated. For many sufferers this condition prevents them from functioning at their usual levels while some people experience a milder version of SAD, sometimes termed ‘Winter Blues’, which causes discomfort.

The main age of SAD commencement is between 18 and 30 years old, so it is important for you to begin monitoring your winter frame of mind as early as possible.

The main symptoms you may experience if you suffer from SAD are:

- Low mood
- Anxiety/irritability
- Oversleeping/tiredness
- Lethargy
- Less interest in sex
- Difficulty coping at home and at work
- Overeating with craving for carbohydrates/sweet foods
- Avoidance of social contact
- Weakened immune system with more risk of infection.



You’ll find that these symptoms begin in the autumn, worsen as winter moves along and then improve with the approach of spring. If you feel that you may be suffering from SAD speak with your doctor for a proper diagnosis. If you suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder it is important to:

- Get as much natural daylight (especially midday and on bright days)
- Eat a healthy diet
- Exercise regularly
- Get plenty of sleep and relaxation.
- Pace yourself during the year. Often people with SAD will be very active during the spring/summer time. There is a risk if we take on too much then we might burnout which would further fuel SAD in autumn and winter.

Your EAP can help you to develop tools and strategies to manage SAD.

