

The UConn Buzz



What is Seasonal Affective Disorder

CT Quit Line: 1-800-QUIT-NOW

CT Poison Control 24/hotline: 1-800-222-1222

As the days grow shorter and the temperatures drop, many of us find ourselves craving the warmth and light of summer. But for some, the winter months can bring more than just a longing for sunshine. Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), often referred to as the "winter blues," is a condition that affects many individuals during the darker and colder seasons.

SAD is a type of depression that occurs cyclically. "In most cases, SAD symptoms start in the late fall or early winter and go away during the spring and summer; this is known as winter-pattern SAD or winter depression typically starting in the late fall or early winter and improving in the spring." ([National Institutes of Health, NIH](https://www.nih.gov/health-topics/seasonal-affective-disorder))

While the exact cause of SAD is not fully understood, it is believed to be linked to a combination of factors, including reduced exposure to sunlight, which can disrupt our circadian rhythms and impact the production of key neurotransmitters like serotonin.

The symptoms of SAD can vary from person to person, but common signs include "fatigue, pervasively sad mood, loss of interest, sleep difficulty, or excessive sleeping, craving, and eating more starches and sweets, weight gain, feelings of hopelessness or despair, and thoughts of suicide" People with SAD may also experience weight gain and an increased need for sleep.

The good news is that SAD is a treatable condition, and there are several effective strategies to combat its effects:

Light Therapy: Light therapy, or phototherapy, involves sitting in front of a specialized lightbox that mimics natural sunlight. This exposure helps regulate your body's internal clock and boosts mood.

Psychotherapy: Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) and other talk therapies can help individuals manage SAD by identifying negative thought patterns and teaching coping strategies.

Medication: In some cases, healthcare professionals may prescribe antidepressant medications to alleviate symptoms of SAD.

Lifestyle Changes: Engaging in regular exercise, maintaining a balanced diet, and getting sufficient sleep can make a significant difference in managing SAD.

Sunlight Exposure: Make an effort to get outside during the daylight hours, even on cloudy days. Spending time in natural light can help combat SAD.

Support Networks: Reach out to friends and family for support and share your feelings and experiences. Sometimes, just talking about your emotions can be a tremendous help.

If you suspect you or someone you know is struggling with SAD,

it's important to seek help from a healthcare professional. Don't let the winter blues overwhelm you. With the right strategies and support, you can effectively manage Seasonal Affective Disorder and find ways to enjoy the beauty of the winter season.



Image: APY

To access referrals for therapy or support services dial 211 or got to: <https://www.211ct.org/>

Get Immediate Help

If you or someone you know is in immediate distress or is thinking about hurting themselves, **call or text the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline toll-free at 988.** You also can text use the Lifeline Chat on the [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](https://www.nationalsuicideline.org/) website.

Source: [NIH](https://www.nih.gov/health-topics/seasonal-affective-disorder), and [John Hopkins Medicine, American Psychological Association](https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/psychiatry/behavioral-science/seasonal-affective-disorder)

HAPPENINGS AROUND TOWN

Breakfast with Santa on the farm, December 9

8:30-9:30 AM, Little Treasures Farm, 22 N Bear Hill Rd, Chaplin, CT 06235 Come have breakfast on the farm with Santa! Welcome to all ages, photo opportunities will be available, bring your own camera. We will be serving Eggs, Pancakes, Bacon, Sausage, Juice, Hot Cocoa, and Coffee. Enjoy the morning on the farm, come visit the rescues, make some crafts, and much more. [Register](#)

Webinar: Stress: learn to push the other button, December 6 from 7-8pm, Start here to learn more about the impact of stress on your health. In this FREE webinar, join Hartford HealthCare Heart and Vascular Institute Lifestyle Medicine and Cardiology provider Brad Biskup, PA-C, to learn more about the impact of stress on your health, stress management tips A LIVE Q&A with Brad will follow the presentation. [REGISTER](#)

Candy Cane Sprint, December 17 in Columbia. 2.5 miler will start and end at the Columbia Recreation Park. Address: 55 Hennequin Road, Columbia CT 06237. For more information: [Candy Cane](#)

The King of Pain 10-Miler, February 5, 9:00am in Glastonbury. "In 2004, a legend was born. The King of Pain is the toughest road race in the history of Glastonbury and, as anyone who has run it knows, it lives up to its name. The course offers breathtaking South Glastonbury orchard scenery, along with hill, after hill, after hill. As a bonus, we scheduled the race smack-dab in the middle of a frigid New England winter. No extra charge.



Image: CDC

Winter Squash Burritos

Ingredients:

1/2 onion, chopped 2 cloves garlic, minced 2 cans fat free refried beans 1/2 cup water 1 tsp ground cumin 2 tsp prepared mustard pinch cayenne pepper 1 T chili powder 1 T soy sauce 6 whole grain tortillas 2 cups cooked winter squash 4 oz shredded Cheddar cheese

Directions 1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees 2. Sauté onion and garlic until soft, add seasonings and mix well. Stir in beans. Gradually stir in water, and heat until warm. Remove from heat. Divide bean mixture and mashed squash evenly between tortillas. Top with cheese. Fold and place on a baking sheet. 3. Bake for 12—15 minutes

Let cool and enjoy!



Nordic Walking

Nordic Walking is a popular fitness activity that provides outdoor exercise and a full-body workout. Originally developed as a summer training method for cross-country skiers, Nordic Walking has evolved into something that people of all ages and fitness levels can enjoy.

The core concept of Nordic Walking is simple: walking with specially designed poles that resemble ski poles. These poles serve to enhance your walking experience by working the upper body and providing stability and balance. This combination reduces the risk of falls.

It is an excellent cardiovascular exercise too. It elevates your heart rate and helps improve your circulation. Additionally, the added effort of using poles, can help you burn more calories than regular walking.

Nordic Walking also engages multiple muscle groups, including the arms, shoulders, core, and legs, yet it is less jarring on the joints. Unlike jogging or running, which can put stress on your joints, Nordic Walking is a low-impact exercise. This makes it suitable for individuals of all ages, even those with joint issues.

Similar to most other forms of exercise, Nordic Walking can have a positive impact on mental well-being. Moreover, being outdoors, breathing fresh air, and getting in touch with nature during your walks can reduce stress and boost your mood.

For more information about how to get started: [5 Reasons to Try Nordic Walking](#)

Sources: [Harvard Health](#), and [Cleveland Clinic](#),

Be Well is an employee wellness program provided through the Eastern Highlands Health District with funding from The CT Department of Health. The goal of the program is to make the healthy choice the easy choice.

