

Nov 16, 2018

Press Release – For Immediate Distribution

Coping with the Winter Blues

As we experience the beginning of winter this causes some temporary feeling of sadness. However, for a percentage of Canadians, the “winter blues” can be much more serious. Now is an excellent time to review past history and determine if you’re at risk for the winter blues, and if so, be pro-active in addressing it this season.

What Is It?

- Previously known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), DSM-V has re-labelled as Depressive Disorder with Seasonal Pattern
- Form of Clinical Depression which impacts 2-6% of the population
- Milder form, often referred to as the “winter blues” affects approximately 15% of the population (may be as high as 30%)
- Most common in adults 20-50
- Occurs eight times more often in women
- Occurs more frequently in northern countries

Symptoms:

- Sleeping more
- Low energy/lethargy
- Intense cravings for carbohydrates
- Weight gain
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Difficulty concentration
- Irritability
- Dramatic improvement in symptoms in the spring

Causes:

- Not completely understood at this time
- Decrease in sunlight in winter can cause decreases in serotonin (helps regulate mood) and melatonin (regulates sleep and mood)

Treatment:

- Variety of psychological, behavioural and pharmacological treatments available
- Light therapy can help to stimulate circadian rhythms and suppress melatonin production
- “dawn stimulators” – form of alarm clock that gradually exposes the sleeper to increasing levels of light



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- Vitamin D (upon consultation with your physician)
- Behavioural strategies including sleep hygiene, physical activity
- Anti-depressant medication may be necessary for some

Psychologists can be accessed through your local health care centre, via workplace Employee Assistance programs, and privately (see [www.apnl.ca](http://www.apnl.ca) – click on Find a Psychologist for more details.).

Media interviews with a Psychologist on this (or other topics), can be arranged by contacting Dr. Janine Hubbard at 682-0235 or [janine@janinehubbard.com](mailto:janine@janinehubbard.com)