

**Be a Friend/Be a Hero**

**There's a  
Hero in You**

**You are  
Brave**

**You are  
a Role  
Model**

**2021 Newsletter**

Brought to you by Kohl's Cares® and Beacon Health System

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**KOHL'S**  
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 **BEACON HEALTH SYSTEM**

## **Coping with the Changing Seasons**

Gone are the days of waking up to sunshine and chirping birds. The days are getting shorter and shorter and many of us begin and end our work or school day in the dark. This can be very depressing. The decreased daylight hours can wreak havoc on our psyche causing many to experience the winter blues or something more serious called seasonal affective disorder. If you are ever feeling overly anxious, stress or depressed, remember to reach to a trusted adult or your primary care physician.

Additionally, if you are ever having thoughts of suicide, call 911 or the National Suicide Hotline: in English 1-800-273-8255, en Español: 1-888-628-9454; Deaf and Hard of Hearing: 1-800-799-4889

### **Seasonal Affective Disorder**

It's normal to feel a little down during the long, cold winter months. But what if the "winter blues" is actually something more serious? Seasonal affective disorder, or SAD, is a form of depression. Unlike the winter blues, SAD can alter the way a person might normally think and feel. Individuals who are typically active and full of energy might find themselves feeling extremely fatigued and lacking vim and vigor. This change in a person's physical wellbeing can understandably impact an individual's emotional wellbeing. Irritability, sadness, and anxiety are often symptoms of seasonal affective disorder. It's easy to see how SAD can spiral into significant depression.

There are things one can do to mitigate the symptoms of winter depression. Vitamin D is often referred to as the "sunshine vitamin" because our bodies produce it naturally when exposed to direct sunlight and because it offers both physical and emotional benefits. Research has shown that vitamin D not only helps to boost the immune system, combat tiredness, and aches and pains it may also play an important role in regulating mood and warding off depression. So even though the days are shorter and the temperatures are colder, put on that favorite comfy sweater, bundle up, and soak in the rewards of that sunshine vitamin.

### **Embrace the Change**

It seems to happen in the blink of an eye. Bright balmy summer days turn into dreary cold winter months. Instead of resisting the change in seasons, embrace it. Look to nature for guidance. Just as the trees have shed their leaves, allow yourself to shed the stress that so often accumulates. Consider winter as a time to slow down. To embrace the splendor of the glistening snow. To drink in the quiet solitude of our warm homes. To reset. Wintertime can be the perfect opportunity to give yourself permission to pamper yourself. Use this time as a period of self-compassion and care, recalibration and balance. Instead of dreading the all too early darkness, light a candle, snuggle up in your favorite blanket, and read the book that has been collecting dust on the shelf or watch that movie you've been wanting to see but haven't had the time. This can also be a good time to practice gratitude. Begin a gratitude journal and acknowledge the abundance you have in your life. Cherish it. Share it.

### **Can Seasonal Affective Disorder Be Prevented?**

Although the first episode of SAD may not be able to be prevented, there are steps you can take to help keep it from coming back. In addition to good physical wellbeing, a well-balanced diet and exercise play a key role in maintaining good mental health. Don't let the winter months prevent you from doing either, as they will give you the energy you need, especially this time of year. Take time to see friends and loved ones. They can help supply support as needed during these long winter months. Finally, if you feel your seasonal affective disorder is increasing contact your healthcare provider. If needed they can offer other medical alternatives to help fight the blues.