

NEWS

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 26, 2009

SAD Times Require Light and Laughter

What is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)?

Seasonal affective disorder (also called SAD) is a type of depression that is triggered by the seasons. The most common type of SAD is called winter-onset depression. Symptoms usually begin in late fall or early winter and go away by summer. SAD may be related to changes in the amount of daylight during different times of the year.

How common is SAD?

As many as half a million people in the United States may have winter-onset depression. Another 10% to 20% may experience mild SAD. SAD is more common in women than in men. Although some children and teenagers get SAD, it usually doesn't start in people younger than 20 years of age. For adults, the risk of SAD decreases as they get older. Winter-onset SAD is more common in northern regions, where the winter season is typically longer and more harsh.

What are the symptoms of SAD?

Although the symptoms are clues to the diagnosis, not everyone who has SAD experiences the same symptoms. Common symptoms of winter-onset SAD include the following:

- A change in appetite, especially a craving for sweet or starchy foods
- Weight gain
- A drop in energy level
- Fatigue
- A tendency to oversleep
- Difficulty concentrating
- Irritability and anxiety
- Increased sensitivity to social rejection
- Avoidance of social situations and a loss of interest in the activities you used to enjoy

- more-



SAD / MHAFC

SAD may also include some of the symptoms that are present in other forms of depression. These symptoms include feelings of guilt, ongoing feelings of hopelessness and physical problems (such as headaches).

Symptoms of SAD tend to come and go at about the same time every year. The changes in mood are not necessarily related to obvious things that would make a certain season stressful (like regularly being unemployed during the winter).

Is there a treatment for SAD?

Yes, treatment is available for SAD. Winter-onset SAD is most likely caused by your body's reaction to the lack of sunlight. Light therapy is one of the best options for treating this type of SAD because increased sunlight can improve symptoms.

If your doctor suggests you try light therapy, you may use a specially made light box, or a light visor that you wear on your head like a cap. You will sit in front of the light box or wear the light visor for a certain length of time each day. Generally, light therapy takes about 30 minutes each day throughout the fall and winter, when you're most likely to be depressed. If light therapy helps, you'll continue it until enough sunlight is available, typically in the springtime. Stopping light therapy too soon can allow the symptoms to come back.

Light therapy should be used carefully in people who have manic depressive disorders, skin that is sensitive to sunlight, and/or medical conditions that make their eyes vulnerable to sunlight damage.

Your doctor may also want you to try medicine or behavior therapy to treat your SAD. If light therapy or medicine alone doesn't work, your doctor may want you to use them together.

Laughter is the Best Medicine



We've heard the expression time and again. For decades, researchers have explored how humor helps patients relieve stress and heal. Laughter helps medical professionals cope with their difficult jobs. It affects the elderly and how it can increase communication in the workplace and in the classroom. Laughter is good for everyone!

MHAFC created their first annual fundraising event called Laughing Away the Blues!

MHAFC partners with CAPA to bring in **The Second City** in a hilarious show called Smart and Funny. This will be our first annual signature event. **The Second City is a Chicago-based group of actors famous for improvisational comedy.** This world-class comedy troupe has become an irreplaceable comic institution.

An incubator for celebrities, The Second City is famous for encouraging the talents of Mike Myers, Gilda Radner, John Belushi, Ed Asner, Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, George Wendt, Chris Farley, Shelley Long and Alan Arkin. Future greats are no doubt on stage right now, performing the kind of hit-and-run sketch comedy that combines play, musical and comedy while trying to stay both topical and universal.

Date: March 6, 2009

Tickets: \$100 (Guests will enjoy heavy hors d'oeuvres, free parking and premiere seating!)

100% of the proceeds directly benefit MHAFC and stay right here in our community.

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