

BHS ASSIST E-NEWS

Are You S.A.D.?

S.A.D., or Seasonal Affective Disorder, can certainly make you feel that way. S.A.D. is a seasonal type of depression related to the change of season, typically occurring in the fall and winter months. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that S.A.D. affects 10 million Americans and is especially high in females, those living far from the equator and



those with a family history of other types of depression. It is more than “cabin fever” or “the winter blues” and though researchers do not know with certainty what causes S.A.D., most attribute it to a disruption in the body’s circadian rhythms (or “biological clock”) caused by a reduced level of sunlight.

Symptoms of S.A.D. can mimic those of depression and can include: hopelessness, loss of energy, anxiety, social withdrawal, loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed, oversleeping, appetite changes (especially high-carb food cravings), weight gain, and difficulty concentrating and processing information. Because the condition is seasonal, it usually occurs at the same time every year. Symptoms can be mild but can worsen into serious issues, such as: school or work problems, social withdrawal, substance abuse, or suicidal thoughts or behavior.

So what can one do about seasonal depression? Just because winter is in full swing doesn’t mean that sufferers

Some easy ways to suppress S.A.D.:

- Let in the light by opening blinds and curtains.
- Get outside to soak up the most rays.
- Exercise regularly to increase energy levels.

have to “tough it out” until blue skies and warmer weather blows in. There are several treatments for S.A.D. that a specialist may recommend. Antidepressants, for example, are used for severe symptoms, and counseling is another treatment that can help sufferers identify and change negative thoughts and (S.A.D. continued on page 4)

International Expect Success Month

Karla Brandau, founder of International Expect Success Month and president of Life Power Dynamics, a firm specializing in personal empowerment, says: “A key factor in fighting depression is to change the view of life from pessimism to optimism. In other words, if you can learn to wake up every morning and ‘Expect Success,’ you will improve the quality of your life, improve your relationships, and be more innovative at work.”

The Quick 6

Good Health Starts With Knowing These Six Key Numbers

With so much information available, it's often hard to remember what's important. So, here's a simple way to check your health: know these six key numbers! It will help determine your risk for developing heart disease, diabetes and other health problems.

1. **YOUR HEIGHT:** *Check Once a Year Over Age 50.* As you grow older, you become shorter. Part of this is due to gravity, but reduced height can also be a sign of osteoporosis and other diseases. Your height also needs to be considered in relation to the next factor, your weight.
2. **YOUR WEIGHT:** *Check Once a Year or More Often if Overweight.* Being overweight is one of the key risk factors for a number of health problems. Losing as little as five or ten percent of your body weight can lower your blood pressure and reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes.
3. **YOUR BODY MASS INDEX (BMI):** *Check Once a Year.* Your BMI measures the relation between your height and your

weight. It's also a good way to measure your percentage of body fat. A healthy BMI is considered between 18.5 and 24.9.

4. **YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE:** *Check Once a Year or More Often if High.* Your blood pressure is the measure of the force of the blood against the walls of the arteries. Anything over 140/90 is considered high blood pressure, increasing your risk for heart attack, stroke and kidney or eye damage.
5. **YOUR BLOOD SUGAR LEVEL:** *Check Once a Year or More Often if Levels Are High.* This test measures the amount of glucose, which your body uses for energy, in your blood. High levels of glucose can lead to diabetes.
6. **YOUR CHOLESTEROL LEVEL:** *Check Every Five Years or More Often if Levels Are High.* Cholesterol is a type of fat that can build up in your blood and cause your arteries to narrow. This narrowing is the starting point for most heart and circulation problems.

Several of these numbers require testing and a visit to your personal physician. That's why healthcare experts recommend a comprehensive physical exam with your personal physician at least once a year. Be sure to visit your physician this year for a checkup and ask your employer if you have the benefits of a wellness program.



“Life is like an EKG.
Without the ups and
downs, you’re not living.”

~ Debra Evans, author

Exercise...it all adds up!

Here are some activities that burn calories. Rank them in order from 1-15 (1 being what burns the most calories and 15 burning the least). Answers are at the bottom in yellow. To learn how many calories you're burning, log onto www.mypyramid.gov and click *MyPyramid Tracker* to assess your physical activity.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------|------------------------|-------|
| A. Watching TV | _____ | I. Sleeping | _____ |
| B. Office work | _____ | J. Basketball(½ court) | _____ |
| C. Biking (flat surface) | _____ | K. Heavy cleaning | _____ |
| D. Jogging | _____ | L. Light cleaning | _____ |
| E. Moving boxes | _____ | M. Brisk walking | _____ |
| F. Sitting | _____ | N. Sitting | _____ |
| G. Golf | _____ | O. Golf | _____ |
| H. Dancing | _____ | | |

School Failure Rocks Mental Health of Girls

New research shows that girls who fall into early patterns of failure often suffer dire consequences, even more so than boys. Girls who experience serious school failure by 12th grade - being expelled, suspended, or dropping out—were significantly more likely to have suffered serious depression by the age of 21 than girls who did not experience these failures. The study did not show the same correlation for boys, however.

“For girls there are broader implications of school failure,” says Carolyn McCarty, a University of Washington researcher. “We already know that it leads to more poverty, higher rates of being on public assistance, and lower rates of job stability. And this study shows it is having mental health implications for girls.”

The study showed that girls who were expelled from school were more than twice as likely to suffer depression than girls who were not expelled. Thirty-three percent of girls who dropped out of school were later depressed, compared to 19 percent of those who did not drop out. Twenty-eight percent of those who were suspended suffered depression as compared to 19 percent of those who were not suspended.

Overall, girls who experienced major school failure suffered depression at a rate of 22 percent; for boys, the depression rate was 17 percent. While fewer girls than boys experienced failure, the consequences were more severe for girls.

If your daughter or son is experiencing failure in school, call Behavioral Health System’s Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to talk to a Care Coordinator.

Answers: 1: D, 2: N, 3: E, 4: C, 5: K, 6: J, 7: H, 8: O, 9: M, 10: G, 11: B, 12: L, 13: F, 14: A, 15: I

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behaviors that may make him/her feel worse while experiencing S.A.D. symptoms.

Light therapy is also a common treatment for S.A.D. Light therapy, also called phototherapy, consists of exposure to intense light under specific conditions. But not just any light - the lighting system, usually in a box, contains a set of special fluorescent bulbs with a special screen to block harmful UV rays. And while participants do not look directly at the light, it is important to position the body so that light can enter the eyes.

Dr. Neall Digert, Ph.D. who has studied human psychological perceptions of light says, "It's the presence and intensity of light in the *blue region* of the visible spectrum that suppresses our body's daytime production of melatonin, and helps regulate our internal

clock... which signals the body to fall asleep and wake up at proper times." But before you drag your halogen work light out from the garage or trot off to the tanning bed, check with a professional before engaging in any type of artificial light therapy (by the way, neither of those will do the trick).

If you're aware that a decrease in sunlight has an affect on your body and you want to try something on your own first, www.mayoclinic.com recommends the following measures:

Let in the Light. Make your environment sunnier and brighter by opening the shades and blinds. And sit close to the window to soak up as many sun beams as possible (but don't forget that sunscreen).

Get Outside. You can catch the most rays when you're out in the open, so go on a walk, eat lunch outside, or just sit on a bench and take in the light.



Exercise Regularly. Physical activity helps us relieve stress and anxiety, lower our blood pressure, increase our energy levels, and just makes us feel good. Whether it's inside or out, plan to get your heart rate up on a regular basis.

If you suspect that you are suffering from S.A.D. or another type of depression, call your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). You may reach your BHS Care Coordinator at 1-800-245-1150.

Tahitian Stir Fry

- 1 can (16 oz) pineapple chunks
- 1/3 cup soy sauce (reduced sodium)
- 1 tsp. black pepper
- 2 tbsp. cornstarch
- 2 tbsp. sugar
- 1 tbsp. vegetable oil
- 3 boneless/skinless chicken breasts cut into 1" pieces
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups sliced zucchini
- 1 cup chopped red and/or green pepper

Instructions: Drain pineapple, reserve juice. Combine soy sauce, pineapple juice, black pepper, cornstarch, and sugar in small bowl and set aside. Cook and stir chicken and garlic in hot oil, over medium-high heat in large, nonstick skillet until chicken is lightly browned and no longer pink in center. Add zucchini and bell pepper to skillet, cook 3 minutes or until vegetables are tender-crisp. Add soy mixture and cook until heated through and sauce is thickened. Stir in pineapple chunks. Serve over rice. *Note:* Use low sodium rice to reduce the salt content.

Prep time: 15-30 min

Calories: 359

Cook Time: < 15 min

Fat: 5.8 g

Servings: 4

Carbs: 32 g

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