



You Don't Have to Be SAD

The winter months can be a brutal time. We're surrounded by plenty of influences telling us we *should* be happy (bright lights! Catchy Christmas music! Meaningful church services!), but sometimes it seems like no amount of holiday cheer will actually help you feel happier.

Fortunately, there is help available. Below, the Mayo Clinic lays out the most common symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder. If you have these symptoms, please don't stay silent — ask for help. You're not alone in this, and life can get better.

Major depression

Seasonal affective disorder is a subtype of major depression that comes and goes based on seasons. So symptoms of major depression may be part of SAD, such as:

- Feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- Feeling hopeless or worthless
- Having low energy
- Losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- Having problems with sleeping
- Experiencing changes in your appetite or weight
- Feeling sluggish or agitated
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Having frequent thoughts of death or suicide

Fall and winter SAD

Symptoms specific to winter-onset SAD, sometimes called winter depression, may include:

- Irritability
- Tiredness or low energy
- Problems getting along with other people
- Hypersensitivity to rejection
- Heavy, "leaden" feeling in the arms or legs
- Oversleeping
- Appetite changes, especially a craving for foods high in carbohydrates
- Weight gain

How to Get Help:

- To talk to someone in person, make an appointment with the **Oakwood University Department of Health & Counseling Services** at (256) 726-7840.
- If you're suicidal, call **911** or the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** at 1-800-273-8255.
- If you're in crisis and you'd prefer to text, contact the **Crisis Text Line** by texting GO to 741741.
- Would you rather get support via email? Try the **Befrienders** support group — send a message to jo@samaritans.org.
- The Huntsville chapter of the **National Alliance on Mental Illness** holds weekly meetings for people living with mental illness. Drop by the United Way Building (701 Andrew Jackson Way) any Thursday at 5:30 p.m., or get more information at <http://www.namialabama.org/affiliates#huntsville>.