

SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) Part 1: All About SAD Transcript

Hello, hello! In this video, we will be discussing the topic of S.A.D., not sad as in the emotional state, but S.A.D. as in seasonal affective disorder - otherwise known as S.A.D. for short. Now, let us get started

Many of us may be unfamiliar with the term, or have questions about Seasonal affective disorder. Well, S.A.D. is a type of depression with certain, and specific characteristics.

Symptoms of this affective disorder often start early in the fall and continue until wintertime. Sometimes the behavior/mood shifts may even last til the start of spring. To highlight, here are 2 types of S.A.D. There's what's known as a winter pattern/winter depression - and just as a side note, winter depression or pattern is not to be confused with the less serious winter blues. The second type of S.A.D. is known as a summer pattern. So again, there is a winter and summer pattern.

Going into how exactly depression comes into play - individuals may experience a winter-pattern depression due to shorter days and longer nights. Meaning, there is less sunshine throughout the day and nighttime typically arrives earlier in the day.

In contrast, summer-pattern depression is experienced when daylight takes up most of the day - leaving less room for nighttime.

We typically cannot spot whenever someone may be going through a summer or winter depression - it often takes a doctor's visit to recognize these patterns and for a diagnosis.

S.A.D. is often associated with severe symptoms, which often make life difficult. It may become harder to focus on work, it may impact social life, and/or make it harder to take care of responsibilities at home.

Research shows that 1 out of 20 people who live in the northern half of the US show symptoms that are suggestive of winter-pattern S.A.D.

Symptoms of S.A.D. can take anywhere from 4 to 5 months. Individuals who live in the north may experience a different time frame compared to those who live in the south.

Before going into the causes for S.A.D., we should keep in mind that... most research comes from looking into winter pattern depression compared to its counterpart - which there is little to no information on.

Research suggests that sunlight is a big factor in all of this. Meaning, that sunlight carries and provides the body with a natural, essential chemical that maintains balance in the brain - and that chemical is serotonin. With less sunlight and shorter days, individuals lose serotonin during the winter months.

Another factor to keep in mind is the drop in Vitamin D. Inadequate Vitamin D in nutritious food or a Vitamin D deficiency from no sunlight can also be a cause.

Researchers also agree that Melatonin levels may be affected as well. Melatonin, like serotonin, is a brain chemical that is responsible for keeping the sleep/wake cycle stable. Too much of this chemical can often lead to drowsiness throughout the day and may leave you feeling sluggish - which can lead to being not as active or less productivity.

On the other hand, low melatonin levels can cause insomnia and a feeling of restlessness throughout the night.

S.A.D. is typically more common in people who have already been diagnosed with depression or with a different disorder. For example, individuals with panic disorder, anxiety, bipolar disorder will typically experience SAD on top of that.

As for which population is more likely to experience a seasonal disorder...millions of American women are more commonly affected compared to American men. S.A.D. usually takes place in early adulthood.

Winter depression or winter pattern S.A.D. is often more experienced and recognizable than summer pattern S.A.D. Individuals who live in the north are also more likely to experience winter depression. Those who live in Canada, Alaska, or in northern states in general tend to be more familiar with winter pattern S.A.D. Southerners (from Texas or Florida for example) may be less impacted due to there being more sunshine.

For links or more information, there are readily available resources online. We also provide some links at the end of this video. If there is still some clarification that is needed or any questions, contact DHHSC, your CSS, or our very beautiful Alexander Sanborn - our public relations/outreach specialist. Thank you for watching.