

SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) Part 2: Treatment(s) Transcript

Hello everyone. In our last vlog we talked about SAD which is Seasonal Affective Disorder. We talked about what it looks like and what are the expected symptoms. This is now part 2 with the same topic, we are going to be talking about treatments for SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder.

Now we are going to discuss different treatments, starting with light therapy. Light therapy might be a new concept so I'm going to go ahead and explain what that would look like. This would be typically a person affected with SAD would go into a very brightly lit room. These lights are typically about 20x brighter than your stereotypical indoor lights. The person would go into this room and stay for about 30-45 minutes. This would be an everyday kind of this so imagine going in every morning then continuing on with your day after the light therapy. You can start this kind of therapy in the fall and continue to the spring since this is for winter pattern SAD. People with light sensitivity may not benefit from light therapy but of course that depends on the individual. Also if you take medication that causes sensitivity to sunlight this might not be beneficial to you so its always important to consult with your doctor.

The next kind of treatment we are going to talk about is psychotherapy. This is almost the same as talking to a therapist or a counselor and being able to vent and express your feelings. This is used as a treatment for both winter pattern SAD as well as summer pattern SAD. More specifically there is CBT. This is Cognitive Behavior Therapy. For short we will refer to it as CBT. This kind of therapy helps people challenge their thoughts. If they are having these negative thoughts and feelings they are able to work through it and change these thoughts into more positive thoughts. CBT will be modified to be able to fit therapy for SAD so often you will see it as CBT-SAD. People then know this is therapy specifically for SAD. For psychotherapy they typically provide group sessions for 6 weeks, meeting 2 times a week. The group will come together and work together to analyze their thoughts and make them into more positive thoughts. For example if people are feeling sad because it's winter now and it's getting dark very easily. Or the opposite direction: if it's summer and people are annoyed with the sun glaring on them at all times, they learn how to change these negative thoughts into positive thoughts.

Another type of psychotherapy would be behavioral activation. This is another process that helps people make up different plans and different fun activities from themselves to do. For example, during the winter time people tend to stay in because it's too cold and they don't want to become sick. Meaning their interest in doing different activities is declining. The same concept with summer time. If the temperature is too hot people would rather stay inside where it's cool and where they have AC. And again, their motivation to make plans and go out is declining. This kind of therapy helps these individuals plan fun activities or something to do. Whether that be indoors or outdoors.

I want to now compare CBT and light therapy. Researchers have collected data and proved both CBT and light therapy are effective for improving SAD. However, light therapy tends to be more effective and has more results.

Next we are going to talk about antidepressant medication. This medication you can take on its own or you can combine that with meeting with a therapist or counseling regularly. This medication has a specific kind of chemical that helps control your natural occurring chemicals in your brain. This helps improve your mood and your stress levels as well. However, antidepressants do take a while to see results. You can be taking this medication for several weeks, maybe 4-8 weeks before you do notice a change in your mood. Oftentimes this medication helps people that struggle with sleeping, if they do not have an appetite, or if they need help with their concentration or focus, this medication typically improves those symptoms. It will improve these symptoms before it changes your mood. All medications do have possible side effects, whether that be nausea or headaches or any other kind of side effect. It is important you consult with your doctor before starting this medication to see if it is the right fit for you.

Now we are going to talk about Vitamin D. If you are vitamin D deficient there are supplements you can take. If you are taking vitamin D alongside participating with light therapy, results may vary. There are mixed results when they are combined. And remember, it is always important to consult with your doctor before starting any new medication and any new vitamins.

Also, keep in mind that the treatments we just went over are specifically for winter pattern SAD. Unfortunately for summer pattern SAD there are no treatments since there is less data and less research for summer pattern SAD.

There are clinical trials available. These clinical trials are extremely important for different doctors and researchers because it provides them the opportunity to further investigate and research about specific illnesses. They learn how to prevent, how to detect, and how to treat these different diseases and conditions.

The purpose of these clinical trials is to help researchers find and discover more scientific knowledge related to different illnesses and ailments. People can volunteer for any reason. There are many reasons to volunteer. So if another sickness comes up it can help doctors and researchers learn more about the illness. So if in the future there is a widespread illness, the doctors and researchers already know what to do and they can help. People with other health conditions are more than welcome to volunteer for these clinical trials.

We will provide links at the end of this vlog if you are interested in more information you can always pull up the websites and learn more. If something wasn't clear to you, and you weren't really understanding, you can always reach out to your client service specialist or reach out to Alexander Sanborn who is our public outreach specialist for more information. Thank you all for watching!