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# WINTER IS COMING

And with it, seasonal depression. Here are five ways to prep for and combat it.

**A**s the weather turns colder and days get shorter, it's common to feel a little off. Maybe you miss leaving work when the sun's still out. Or maybe you just miss baseball season. But according to Nada Milosavljevic, M.D., J.D., a faculty member at Harvard Medical School, it could be more serious than that. Seasonal affective disorder (or SAD) is a subtype of depression that affects about 5% of the U.S. population each year. SAD can strike anyone, so to help you recognize the symptoms and set yourself up for a happier winter, here are the good doctor's top tips for fighting SAD.

**1 STAY ACTIVE**  
"Moving the body can increase the release of 'feel good' endorphins and other hormones that can support an improved mood," Milosavljevic says. So rather than hibernating through the

winter months, be sure to get plenty of exercise.

**2 TRY LIGHT THERAPY**  
Get some sunlight if you can. Or, failing that, try a light box, which will increase your

exposure to light during the darker months. Find one that filters out UV rays, and aim to get 20 to 60 minutes of cool white light each day at a strength of 10,000 lux.

**3 TALK IT OUT**  
More specifically, employ a little cognitive behavioral therapy. "This can provide specific tools and skills to counteract the triggers and symptoms of SAD," says Milosavljevic. Basically, through talking, mindfulness, and general awareness of the situation, you can recognize and then mitigate the impact of seasonal depression.

**4 GET PLENTY OF VITAMIN D**  
A lack of this all-important vitamin can lead to fatigue and depression. And considering winter's habit of hiding the sun (your best natural source of vitamin D), you might be more at risk than usual. Try supplementing with vitamin D pills and foods like salmon, eggs, and milk. Better yet, get your levels checked to ensure that there's no underlying deficiency.

**5 ASK FOR HELP**  
"It's important to be aware of your symptoms and know your limits," says Milosavljevic. When your ability to engage in daily activities diminishes, or your mood leads to feelings of hopelessness or pronounced sadness, it is critical to seek medical attention.

**FEELING SUICIDAL?**

Text **CONNECT** to 741741. It's free, and a trained counselor will help you.