

# THE CITIZEN-DIS-CHEM WINTER WELLNESS SUPPLEMENT

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IN DIS-CHEM SUPPLEMENT IN THE CITIZEN

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As days become shorter and the temperature falls, many people find that their spirits also drop. But there are ways to boost your mood and motivation even on the darkest of chilly days.

The winter blues isn't an old wives' tale. Many people across the globe, suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), which is a type of depression that is linked to the changes in seasons. People who suffer from it tend to experience symptoms at about the same time each year and most people are affected during autumn and winter.

Executive Life Coach Penny Holburn says there are several hypotheses as to what causes SAD. "Usually symptoms are related to the reduced amount of sunlight in autumn and winter, which could lead to a drop in the level of serotonin (a brain chemical that affects mood), a change in melatonin levels (which disrupts sleep and affects moods) and a drop in vitamin D levels."

People who already suffer from mood disorders such as depression or bipolar, and people who live a long way from the equator, are more likely to show symptoms of SAD.

## What are the most common symptoms of SAD?

- Low energy levels
- Sleeping too much
- Overeating
- Craving carbohydrates
- Heaviness in arms and legs
- Social withdrawal (a bit like hibernating)
- Feeling sluggish or agitated
- Experiencing changes in sleep patterns

# Effective ways to boost your mood and beat the winter blues

Holburn says there are scientifically proven ways to lift your spirits and ease the mid-winter doldrums.

**Stick to your regular schedule:** Avoid the temptation to veg indoors, even when the weather is bleak. Try to continue with the same activities and hobbies you would do in the summer months.

**Spend time outdoors:** Fresh air and sunshine can boost your mood and lower stress levels so opt to enjoy a meal or snack outdoors, take a midday walk or play an outdoor sport.

**Brighten your environment:** Make your work and home environment sunnier and brighter. Open the curtains or blinds fully to ensure that there is natural light during the day. Bright light for a few hours first thing in the morning is the most effective.

**Make wise food choices:** Avoid binging on high-fat, carb-heavy foods as it can heighten feelings of lethargy and depression. Also steer clear of consuming too much alcohol.

**Get moving:** While it may be tempting to ditch the workout in favour of days wrapped up in a blanket, research shows that exercising for about 35 minutes a day five times a week or 60 minutes a day three times a week improves symptoms of mild to moderate depression, particularly when done in bright light.

**Give yourself something to look forward to:** Plan fun activities with family and friends or plan a holiday as this will impact your overall state of mind. Also, keep up your social life and make time for your loved ones.

If your SAD symptoms continue to worsen over winter, it is advisable to consult a mental health professional. Generally, therapy includes a combination of light therapy (phototherapy), medication, psychotherapy and vitamin D supplements, for those who suffer from a deficiency.

Holburn suggests seeking the help of a professional because mood disorders could be related to physical problems such as an underactive thyroid or a chemical imbalance.

**Light therapy:** SAD Light Therapy boxes create a simulation of sunlight so that the melanopsin receptors in the eyes can trigger the required serotonin release within the brain for natural sleep cycles and general feelings of well being.

**Herbal Supplements:** Herbal Supplements are generally plant based health products which aid in providing support for the body whereby regular vitamins may be lacking due to general work -life stress. Often we find that it's impossible to get every vitamin needed for good health through diet and these herbal supplements can assist in providing this where lacking. During the winter months vitamin C, for example helps in fighting the flu and colds and there many fruits and vegetables which provide this source of vitamin but it's almost impossible to consume enough of these to get a sufficient supply of vitamins. Using herbal supplements can help in boosting the supply received from such fruits and

vegetables. Check out your nearest Dis-Chem store where our consultants will assist in determining which herbal supplement is best for you.

## “There are scientifically proven ways to lift your spirits and ease the mid-winter doldrums.”

--- Penny Holburn, Executive Life Coach

**SSRI antidepressants:** It's crucial to consult a medical professional to prescribe the right medication and dosage. Medications can take a few weeks before they work which can be frustrating but it's important to hang in there.

**Vitamin D supplement:** If you suffer from a deficiency, supplements may help but stick to the recommended dose or that instructed by your doctor.

**Psychotherapy:** This kind of therapy usually focuses on identifying and overcoming negative thoughts and replacing them with positive thoughts, as well as behavioural activation to get you out and doing things.