

# Symptoms

## Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

— Symptoms

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The symptoms of SAD are like those of normal depression but they happen at a particular time of year.

They usually start in the autumn or winter and improve in the spring.

Some people may only have mild symptoms. For others, the symptoms can be severe and have a big impact on their day-to-day life.

## Signs of depression

Most people with SAD feel depressed during the autumn and winter.

Signs that you may be depressed include:

- a persistent low mood
- a loss of pleasure or interest in normal everyday activities
- feeling irritable
- feelings of despair, guilt and worthlessness
- suicidal thoughts
- low self-esteem
- tearfulness
- feeling stressed or anxious
- a reduced sex drive
- becoming less sociable

Some people with mood-related disorders such as [bipolar disorder](#) may also find their symptoms change with the season. They can make them more likely to experience depression in winter months, and periods of elation or feeling 'high' in summer months.

[Low mood - tips and self-help](#)

## Other symptoms

You may also:

- be less active than normal
- feel lethargic (lacking in energy) and sleepy during the day
- sleep for longer than normal and find it hard to get up in the morning
- find it difficult to concentrate
- have an increased appetite

These symptoms may make everyday activities increasingly difficult.

## When to see your GP

Talk to your GP if you think you might have SAD and you're finding it difficult to cope.

Your GP can carry out an assessment to check your mental health. They may ask you about your mood, lifestyle, eating habits and sleeping patterns, plus any seasonal changes in your thoughts and behaviour.

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Content supplied by the [NHS](#) and adapted for Ireland by the HSE

Page last reviewed: 1 September 2022

Next review due: 1 September 2025

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