

# cg1 WELL SAID.

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## Beat the Winter Blues

"Winter blues is a general term, not a medical diagnosis. It's fairly common, and it's more mild than serious. It usually clears up on its own in a fairly short amount of time," says Dr. Matthew Rudorfer, a mental health expert at the National Institute of Health (NIH). The so-called winter blues are often linked to something specific, such as stressful holidays or reminders of absent loved ones.

"Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), though, is different. It's a well-defined clinical diagnosis that's related to the shortening of daylight hours," says Rudorfer. "It interferes with daily functioning over a significant period of time." It appears each year as the seasons change, and it goes away several months later, usually during spring and summer.

### What Triggers SAD?

Reduced sunlight in fall and winter can disrupt your body's internal clock, or circadian rhythm. During the day, your brain sends signals to other parts of the body to help keep you awake and ready for action. At night, a tiny gland in the brain produces a chemical called melatonin, which helps you sleep. Shortened daylight hours in winter can alter this natural rhythm and lead to SAD in certain people.

### How Can SAD Be Treated?

NIH researchers first recognized the link between light and seasonal depression back in

the early 1980s. "Light therapy is meant to replace the missing daylight hours with an artificial substitute," says Rudorfer.

In light therapy, patients generally sit in front of a light box every morning for 30 minutes or more, depending on the doctor's recommendation. The box shines light much brighter than ordinary indoor lighting. Studies have shown that light therapy relieves SAD symptoms for as much as 70% of patients after a few weeks of treatment. Some improvement can be detected even sooner.

Growing evidence suggests that cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) - a type of talk therapy - can also help patients who have SAD. The "behavioral" part of CBT tries to teach people new behaviors to engage in when they're feeling depressed, to help them feel better.

If you're feeling blue this winter, and if the feelings last for several weeks, talk to a health care provider. "It's true that SAD goes away on its own, but that could take FIVE months or more. Five months of every year is a long time to be impaired and suffering," says Rudorfer. "SAD is generally quite treatable, and the treatment options keep increasing and improving."

Source: [WELCOA.com](http://WELCOA.com)



## Lift Your Mood

These "self-care" tips might help with seasonal depression. See a mental health professional if sadness doesn't go away or interferes with your daily life:

- \* Go to a movie, take a walk, go ice-skating or do other activities you normally enjoy.
- \* Get out in the sunlight or brightly lit spaces, especially early in the day.
- \* Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.
- \* Eat nutritious foods, and avoid overloading on carbohydrates like cookies and candies.
- \* Be patient. You won't suddenly "snap out of" depression. Your mood will improve gradually.
- \* If you have thoughts of suicide, get help right away. Call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

*"Never think that what you have to offer is insignificant. There will always be someone out there who needs what you have to give."*

*Unknown author*

## Guacamole



Here's a healthy comfort food for this winter. This fresh, vibrant, cool and creamy guacamole is perfect for your dipping pleasure.

Servings: makes 4 servings

### Ingredients

- 2 large avocados, mashed
- 1 lime, juiced
- 1 jalapeno pepper, finely diced
- 1 plum tomato, seeded and finely diced
- 1/4 cup red onion, finely diced
- 1 tablespoon cilantro, chopped
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin, toasted and ground (optional)
- salt, pepper and cayenne to taste

### Directions

Mix everything.



## What Is Pre-Diabetes?

Sometimes people's blood sugar levels run higher than normal. But not high enough to be called "diabetes." This is known as "pre-diabetes."

### Take it seriously

Over 16 million Americans suffer from the condition. Most "pre-diabetics" develop full-on diabetes within 10 years. They're also at higher risk of heart disease, heart attack and stroke. It seems like a scary diagnosis, but you can beat it. It will take some healthy decisions, though.

### Find your healthy weight

If you're overweight, you're more likely to get pre-diabetes. By losing 5% to 7% of total body weight, you can lower your risk. That's the same as 10 to 15 pounds if you weigh 200 pounds. A good diet can lower your weight and improve overall health.

### Choose the right foods

Try eating more:

- Fruits and vegetables
- Legumes (beans, lentils, chickpeas, etc.)
- Whole grains
- Unsalted nuts
- Lean meats

Cut back on:

- Salty foods - like potato chips, corn chips and lunch meats
- "White" carbs (like white bread, pasta and rice)
- Sugary drinks
- Saturated fats and trans-fatty acids - the term "hydrogenated" on a food label means there is saturated and or trans-fatty acids - look for this red-flag and avoid eating foods with it.



### Start moving around

Even light activities like walking or swimming can make a huge difference. Keeping up the movement is what matters. Try and make it a routine.

Talk to your doctor and figure out what works best for you.

### Two ways to measure blood sugar (glucose)

- Fasting Glucose Test: Levels of 100 to 125 mg/dL (milligrams per deciliter of blood) are considered impaired; they are above normal, but not high enough to be called diabetes.
- Glucose Tolerance Test: Levels of 140 to 199 mg/dL are considered impaired; they are above normal, but not high enough to be called diabetes.

Source: Anthem.com



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