



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Champlain East
Mental health for all

Association canadienne
pour la santé mentale
Champlain Est
La santé mentale pour tous

329 rue Pitt Street
Cornwall, ON K6J 3R1
Tel 613-933-5845
1-800-493-8271
Fax 613-936-2323
cmha-east.on.ca
acsm-est.on.ca

Submitted by: Canadian Mental Health Association Champlain East

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How to beat the winter blues

Yes, winter is here now in Canada and with it come wet boots, grey skies and snow to shovel. This time of the year can be tough for some of us. Are you feeling like your mood is dropping with the temperature? If yes, you are not alone.

While the winter season brings some people joyful thoughts of hot chocolate milk and fun winter sports, it tends to sprinkle the winter blues on some of us this time of year.

Do you know what the winter blues are?

The winter blues are a wave of low emotions that come with these cold, dark days.

If you're experiencing the winter blues, it is possible that you feel the need to sleep a bit longer, indulge in comfort food more often than usual, and spend more time watching television shows than with your loved ones.

You may have heard people referring to this as seasonal affective disorder (SAD), but the winter blues and SAD are two different things.

Here is the difference between the winter blues and seasonal affective disorder:

About 15% of people in Canada experience the winter blues, while only about 2-3% of people in Canada experience SAD.[1]

SAD is a widely researched condition of regularly occurring depression in the winter season [2] that can impair one's daily life. Treatment can include light therapy, counselling, medication, or a combination of the three. A professional can help determine if you are experiencing SAD.

You might wonder what you can do to improve or maintain your mood this winter.

Here are some suggestions:

Let the light in

If you can, try to go outside for a walk or to practice a winter sport during the day. When indoors, keep your curtains open and try to spend as much time as possible near the windows. Getting daylight can help lift your mood, even if the sky is cloudy.



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Get physical

Even though you might not feel like going to the gym, remember that doing some physical activity is always great to help you manage your mental health. Start small. Even going outside for a walk at lunchtime can be beneficial.

Try to keep a normal sleep schedule

It might feel like your bed is the best place to be to fight this winter blues. However, over-sleeping can actually worsen the symptoms of the winter blues.

Give yourself a pat on the back – you're doing great.

Battling low moods is not easy to accomplish. Remember that it is important to be kind to yourself. You are stronger than you think!

Finally, ensure to have regular check-ins with yourself, and to spend that extra time on self-care if you need to.

[1] Levitt, A.J., Boyle, M.H., Joffe, R.T., & Bauml, Z. 2000. Estimated prevalence of the seasonal subtype of major depression in a Canadian community sample. *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, 45(7), 650-654.

[2] Magnusson, Andres, and Diane Boivin. "Seasonal affective disorder: an overview." *Chronobiology international* 20, no. 2 (2003): 189-207.

DO YOU NEED MORE HELP?

Contact a community organization like the Canadian Mental Health Association to learn more about support and resources in your area.

The information provided is not a substitute for professional advice. If you need advice, please consult a qualified health care professional. For further information or if you want to access our services at CMHA, please call 1-800-493-8271 or visit our web site at www.cmha-east.on.ca

If you are thinking of suicide, please call 1-833-456-4566 toll free in Canada or dial 911.