



Loving Arms
Elder Care

WINTER BLUES

FACT OR FICTION

As the days get shorter, daylight becomes scarce and the nights get colder, it is natural to feel a little down. The winter months might even have a more pronounced impact on seniors who live alone and experience the frigid weather and icy sidewalks making it more difficult to get out and socialize, run errands, shop, and even maintain regular routines. This may all lead to the "winter blues". The "winter blues" (also known as Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)) are characterized by mild depression, fatigue, sleeping more, changes in activity level, not wanting to engage in regular activities and changes in appetite.

Luckily, there's a lot you can do to prevent the blues from coming on and get yourself back to normal.

Light Therapy

- Open curtains and blinds to allow in as much daylight as possible.
- Sit near a window.
- Spend time outdoors every day - even on cloudy days.
- Change the light bulbs in your house to "full spectrum" bulbs.
- Have your bedroom lights turn on a half hour before you're supposed to wake up.
- Expose yourself to sunlight as early in the morning as you can.



Healthy Diet

- Eat foods with complex carbohydrates.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Eat foods that are high in Vitamin D, which increases serotonin levels
- Limit consumption of starchy and sweet foods.



Physical Activity

- Exercise 30 minutes a day, three times a week.
- Use an exercise DVD or stream a video from the internet.
- On days when it is warmer, go for a walk.
- A stationary bike also provides opportunity for exercise in the home.



WINTER BLUES ~ CONTINUED

Stay involved

- Involve yourself with hobbies, friends, church and social activities.
- Call a friend.
- Chat over coffee or online.
- Write a nice email or letter to family and friends.

Sleep

- Aim for 7-8 hours each night.
- Try to keep your bedtime and waking time consistent.

Avoid Binge Drinking - Alcohol is a depressant, and rather than improving your mood, it only makes it worse.

Treat Yourself - Have something to look forward to.



Vibrant colors - Yellows, red and oranges add a splash of sunshine to your surroundings. Use colorful artwork, pillows, tablecloths, furniture covers and flowers (fresh or silk) to bring the sun indoors.

Keep the Mind Active - participate in mental exercises such as crossword puzzles, Sudoku, jigsaw puzzles or crafts.

Medication - Speak with a healthcare professional about options for antidepressants and psychotherapy.

For those who have been independent and able to do things on their own, now might be a good time to utilize the services of *Loving Arms Elder Care*. Our specially trained caregivers can provide assistance and companionship to help you get through those "winter blues". So remember, keep moving, eat healthy and stay involved, because spring and summer eventually come back.