

How to Combat the End-of-Winter Blues

by M. Scott Stanley, MS

Have you been feeling a bit down in the dumps or fatigued during these end-of-winter months? Have you not had the motivation to stay on your New Year's exercise or healthy eating plan? If so, then this article is for you. It's fairly normal to feel a bit blue during the end-of-winter months. Let's face it, it's cold, the sun isn't out much, and it's very difficult to be active outside. As it turns out, the lack of sunlight is the key. You may not know this, but sunlight is very important to regulating hormones such as melatonin and serotonin, which affect mood, and it helps to regulate your circadian rhythm (your body's internal clock). The reduced sunlight during the winter can increase melatonin and decrease serotonin, which can lead to the "winter blues," or to a more severe seasonal condition called seasonal affective disorder (SAD). This can obviously affect your motivation to eat right and exercise.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- » Feelings of depression or hopelessness
- » Anxiety
- » Loss of energy
- » Social withdrawal
- » Sleeping too much
- » Loss of interest in activities you once enjoyed
- » Appetite changes, especially a craving for carbohydrates
- » Weight gain
- » Difficulty concentrating or processing information
- » General lack of motivation

Should I See My Physician About This?

If you have any of the above symptoms, whether they be mild or severe, it's worth your while to speak with your doctor, as seasonal affective disorder can become serious, especially if the depression is severe or there are thoughts of suicide.

What Can I Do About It?

Whether you're just feeling a little blue, or whether you actually suffer from the disorder, here are a few suggestions for fighting it:

- » Exercise 5 days per week for 20-30 minutes. Exercise has been known to improve sleep, relieve depression symptoms, and increase serotonin levels naturally.
- » Eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day. The nutrients in these foods will help to increase your energy and lift your spirits.
- » Resist the temptation to eat too many carbohydrates, especially sugary carbohydrates. This can make you sluggish or sleepy and add unwanted weight if you're not exercising enough to burn them off.
- » Try to get at least 7 hours of sleep per night, and establish a schedule of going to bed and getting up at a regularly set time.
- » Speak to your doctor about light box therapy. There are special lamps that you can buy that provide you with natural sunlight without the harmful radiation. Be sure the light source has an output of 10,000 lux.
- » Speak to your doctor to determine if certain medications or dietary supplements are right for you, or to determine whether you have full blown seasonal affective disorder.
- » Consider speaking to a clinician in your employee assistance program (EAP).
- » Unless skin cancer runs in your family, try to enjoy the few sunny days we do have by walking outside on your lunch break or opening the blinds at home or in the office.

Source: *The Mayo Clinic*

When you need help, call Symmetry Wellness at 419.475.5338 or 1.800.422.5338. It's free and confidential.

Alcoholism Signs And Symptoms You Should Know

by Olinda Rola

Alcoholism signs and symptoms are clues that alcohol may be a problem. If left untreated, alcoholism signs and symptoms and alcoholism can affect the quality of life of the person as well as those around them. Alcoholism is a disease where alcohol consumption (beer, wine, or hard liquor) is at a level that interferes with the person's physical and mental health, and negatively impacts family, social or work responsibilities.

Alcoholism symptoms can be recognized relatively early in the disease's progression, but if not dealt with, alcoholism can be fatal. Here are alcoholism signs and symptoms that indicate alcohol may be a problem:

- » Becoming Angry When Confronted About Drinking
- » Daily or Frequent Alcohol Consumption Needed to Function
- » Drinking Alone
- » Finding Excuses to Drink
- » Food Intake Neglect
- » Hiding Alcohol Related Behavior
- » Inability to Stop or Reduce Alcohol Consumption
- » Memory Loss, Blackouts
- » Morning Shakes
- » Nausea, Vomiting
- » Physical Appearance Neglect
- » Violent Episodes Occur When Drinking

When considering alcoholism signs and symptoms, alcoholism can be broadly divided into two categories - alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence. Alcohol abusers may drink heavily at various times, but they have not yet become alcohol dependent. Alcoholism signs and symptoms for alcohol abusers can be problems that happen while being intoxicated such as drinking and driving, violent episodes, or missing appointments, work or school.

Alcohol dependence can develop over the years and follows a generally predictable pattern. A tolerance of alcohol develops first, which means a person needs to consume greater quantities of alcohol before the same effects are noticed. Over time, the person may

lose control over their drinking and may not be able to stop even if they want to. And if alcohol consumption is reduced or stopped, withdrawal symptoms can be experienced which can range from annoying to life-threatening.

If the alcoholic continues drinking, he or she may become obsessed with drinking to the exclusion of almost everything else. Many of the above alcoholism signs and symptoms may be noticed. The most severe kind of drinking is called 'binge drinking', periods of time with continuous heavy alcohol consumption.

If alcoholism continues to progress, the mental and physical health of the alcoholic can seriously deteriorate. Many of the body's organs can become damaged which lowers resistance to disease and infections. Relationships at home or socially may become damaged, and there can be financial and legal problems due to the alcoholic's inability to stop drinking.

If the alcoholic continues to drink, alcohol can ultimately cause their death one way or another. Accidents and related injuries, suicide, drownings and falling asleep in bed while smoking and intoxicated and burning to death are examples of the consequences of alcoholism. Health-wise, damage to the body's organs and systems due to long-term excessive drinking means the person will likely suffer from a number of diseases and conditions such as heart disease, cirrhosis of the liver, malnutrition and cancer.

Are there different stages of alcoholism? Yes, most definitely. If the alcoholism signs and symptoms indicate that alcohol consumption is becoming or is already a problem, there are resources available to help with alcoholism and the serious consequences of this disease.

About the Author: Learn more about short term physical symptoms of alcohol at <http://www.safemenopausesolutions.com/physical-symptoms-of-alcohol.html>
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