



Fair &amp; Balanced

Search

Get Weather

What's Hot

[Sound Off in the Fox Forum](#) · [New Section! FOX News Travel](#) · [First 100 Days](#)

HOME

U.S.

WORLD

BUSINESS

POLITICS

ENTERTAINMENT

LEISURE

HEALTH

SCITECH

OPINION

SPORTS

ON AIR



October 8th, 2008 9:25 AM Eastern

**Dr. Keith: How to Deal With Seasonal Affective Disorder**

by Dr. Keith Ablow



With the days getting shorter, and sunlight becoming more precious, millions of Americans will experience seasonal affective disorder (SAD). SAD is actual depression that afflicts sufferers again and again during the fall and winter months (although others experience recurrent depression during the warmer seasons, instead). Symptoms typically include a decrease in mood, anxiety, low energy, trouble concentrating, an increased need for sleep, appetite changes (usually increased, including craving carbohydrates), decreased sexual feelings, hopelessness and a lack of interest in activities that the person used to enjoy. Like other forms of major depression, SAD can also trigger thoughts of suicide. The cause of SAD may relate to levels of two chemicals in the brain — melatonin and serotonin. Excessive melatonin levels have been linked to depression, and melatonin levels in the brain tend to rise during the colder months. Serotonin levels, conversely, fall during the winter, when exposure to sunlight is decreased. Those who have experienced some of the symptoms listed above with the change of seasons last year should think about whether SAD is affecting you now or if it will affect you in the coming weeks and months. If family members of yours have a similar pattern, that's all the more reason to wonder whether SAD is responsible for what you're feeling. SAD, like every form of depression, is highly treatable. Psychotherapy and medication are very effective. But there's a special treatment for SAD that can help in as many as 80 percent of cases: **light therapy**. And trying light therapy first makes good sense, provided you aren't experiencing severe symptoms, especially thoughts of harming yourself. Many companies (including ETA Lighting Systems, Northern Light Technologies and LiteBook) sell light therapy devices that contain fluorescent or LED bulbs that mimic sunlight. The bulbs are housed behind a plastic screen and don't expose users to any harmful ultraviolet rays. Sitting in front of a light box for as little as 30 minutes a day (although longer periods are required in some cases) can provide dramatic relief.

Clinical trials haven't yet convinced the Food and Drug Administration to approve bright light therapy as a treatment for SAD, but many scientists are convinced of its benefit. Some clinical trials find it as effective as Prozac, with quicker results and many fewer side effects. In my own practice, I've found it tremendously helpful for many patients over the years. The first key to defeating SAD is recognizing it. Too many people suffer needlessly, thinking they just hate the fall or winter, or get the blues when they can't get outside enough. But if you dread crisp air, falling leaves and the thought of snow on the ground, it's worth wondering how intense that dread really is, and whether symptoms of SAD lurk behind it. *Dr. Keith Ablow is a psychiatry correspondent for FOX News Channel and a New York Times bestselling author. His newest book, "Living the Truth: Transform Your Life through the Power of Insight and Honesty" has launched a new self-help movement. Check out Dr. Ablow's website at [livingthetruth.com](http://livingthetruth.com).*

**Tags:** cold weather, depression, Dr. Keith Ablow, fall, light therapy, melatonin, SAD, Seasonal Affective Disorder, serotonin, sunlight, winter

[Share](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

**"Your \$12,000 Stimulus Check"**

The US Gov't Is Giving Away Billions in Grants. Go Get Your Share!  
JohnGetsGovernmentCash.com

**1 Trick For Whiter Teeth**

Rachel Ray learned how to whiten her teeth. Find out her secret!  
[www.best-teeth-whitening.com](http://www.best-teeth-whitening.com)

[Buy a link here](#)

This entry was posted on Wednesday, October 8th, 2008 at 9:25 am and is filed under [The Mind of the News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0 feed](#). Both comments and pings are currently closed.  
« [Allergy Alert: Preventing a Cold or Flu](#)  
[Tanya's Tasty Tips: Is Caffeine Helpful or Harmful?](#) »

**5 Responses to "Dr. Keith: How to Deal With Seasonal Affective Disorder"***Comment by James Porter*

October 9th, 2008 at 10:35 am

How do determine if a person is depress or physical ill. Women seem to get sad or depress after each birthday in some cases.

*Comment by Emily Paluszak*

October 10th, 2008 at 11:47 am

I have found the sun lamp very helpful. Sitting out on the porch in direct sunlight is even better.

*Comment by EAE*

October 10th, 2008 at 3:56 pm

What do you do when you live with someone who won't admit they are depressed every year fall thru winter, and simply blames everyone else in the family for their bad moods? Zaps the joy out of holidays and you tiptoe on eggshells all the time. He works nights, sleeps extra so misses what sunlight there is, closes all the curtains if up by day and parks in front of TV. Are there lightbulbs that we can sneak into regular lamps that would help?

*Comment by Sue Mobley*

October 15th, 2008 at 9:59 am

I had been using the light therapy, but then found out I had cataracts in both eyes. There was a warning with my instructions not to use the light box if you have cataracts. So I'm back on an anti-depressant, which has helped.

*Comment by Carlie*

October 17th, 2008 at 12:57 am

What about what I call Desert Depression...I live in Tucson, AZ. Moving here caused me to fall into a depression that lasted for three years...I've realized that I need to be surrounded by green, and tucson is just rocks and dirt and ugly all over. I'm not alone either I've helped others deal with their depression after moving here.



• Search this Blog

• Our Contributors



### Dr. Manny

Dr. Manny Alvarez is the Managing Editor of [foxnewshealth.com](http://foxnewshealth.com). Since 1996, he has been the Chairman of the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology and Reproductive Science at Hackensack University Medical Center in New Jersey. Additionally, Alvarez is Adjunct Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at New York University School of Medicine in New York City.



### Dr. Ablow

Dr. Keith Ablow is a psychiatry correspondent for FOX News Channel and a New York Times bestselling author. His newest book, "Living the Truth: Transform Your Life through the Power of Insight and Honesty" has launched a new self-help movement. Check out Dr. Ablow's website at [livingthetruth.com](http://livingthetruth.com).



### Tanya Zuckerbrot

Tanya Zuckerbrot, MS, RD is a nutritionist and the creator of "The F-Factor Diet", an innovative nutritional program she has used for more than ten years to provide hundreds of her clients with all the tools they need to achieve easy weight loss and maintenance, and improved health and well-being.



### Dr. Bassett

Dr. Clifford W. Bassett is an assistant clinical professor of medicine at the Long Island College Hospital and on the faculty of NYU School of Medicine. He is the current vice chair for public education committee of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology.



### Dr. Fulbright

Dr. Yvonne K. Fulbright is a sex educator, relationship expert, columnist and founder of [Sexuality Source Inc.](http://Sexuality Source Inc.) She is the author of several books including, "Touch Me There! A Hands-On Guide to Your Orgasmic Hot Spots."



### Dr. Siegel

Dr. Marc Siegel is an internist and associate professor of medicine at the NYU School of Medicine. He is a Fox News Medical Contributor and writes a health column for LA Times, where he examines TV and movies for medical accuracy. Dr. Siegel is the author of "False Alarm: the Truth About the Epidemic of Fear" and "Bird Flu: Everything You Need to Know About the Next Pandemic". Read more at [www.doctorsiegel.com](http://www.doctorsiegel.com)



### Dr. Sadick

Dr. Neil Sadick is one of the most renowned dermatologists and researchers whose multiple discoveries have strongly influenced and transformed the future of dermatology. He is a Professor of Dermatology at Weill Cornell Medical College and President of the Cosmetic Surgery Foundation. Dr. Sadick is author, or co-author, of more than 500 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals and has contributed more than 75 chapters of medical books. Read more at [www.sadickdermatology.com](http://www.sadickdermatology.com)



## Dr. Curatola

Dr. Gerald P. Curatola is a renowned aesthetic dentist and pioneer in the emerging field of rejuvenation dentistry, which improves patients' overall health and appearance by integrating total wellness with cutting edge oral care and restorative procedures. In addition to his private practice, research, and work as a Clinical Associate Professor at NYU College of Dentistry, he is an internationally sought after speaker, author and expert who has been featured widely in print and broadcast media. For more information, go to [www.rejuvenationdentistry.com](http://www.rejuvenationdentistry.com)

### Categories

- Allergy Alert (42)
- Dr. Manny's Notes (51)
- Dr. Siegel's Take (32)
- Medical Tourism (6)
- More Than Skin Deep (22)
- News (218)
- Sexpert Q&A (76)
- Smile Secrets (6)
- Tanya's Tasty Tips (69)
- The Mind of the News (51)
- Uncategorized (209)
- We Tried It (5)

### Archives

- February 2009
- January 2009
- December 2008
- November 2008
- October 2008
- September 2008
- August 2008
- July 2008
- June 2008
- May 2008
- April 2008
- March 2008
- February 2008

### Blogroll

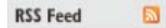
- FOXNews Health
- [healthfinder.gov](http://healthfinder.gov)
- National Institutes of Health

ADVERTISEMENT

### Gathering data...

Please allow up to 3 hours for this zone to activate. Contact [customer service](#) with any questions.

### Subscribe to RSS



### Latest Headlines at FoxNews Health

- **Doctors Use Leeches to Reattach Man's Dangling Hand**  
Surgeons are crediting leeches for allowing them to reattach a man's hand that was nearly bitten off by a shark.
- **Boy's 'Glowing' Eyes See Clearly in Darkness**  
A Chinese boy who has eyes that glow in the dark has stunned doctors with his ability to see and read in complete darkness.
- **FOXSexpert: Embrace Your Inner Voyeur or Exhibitionist**  
Do you prefer watching a strip tease or being the one who strips?
- **Study: More People Abusing, Getting 'High' on Caffeine**  
A study conducted by Northwestern University showed people are now getting high on and abusing a legal substance: caffeine.
- **Study: Internet Addiction May Fuel Teen Aggression**  
Teenagers who are preoccupied with their Internet time may be more prone to aggressive behavior, researchers reported Monday.

[Home](#) | [U.S.](#) | [World](#) | [Politics](#) | [Health](#) | [Business](#) | [SciTech](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Video](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Sports](#) | [Leisure](#)

[Careers](#) | [Internships - FNCU](#) | [Fox Around the World](#) | [RSS Feeds](#)

[Advertise with us](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten, or redistributed. © 2009 FOX News Network, LLC. All rights reserved. All market data delayed 20 minutes.