

FAMILY RESOURCE

C O N N E C T I O N

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Winter Warning: Lack of Daylight May Affect Children’s Moods

Does your child seem to act differently during the cold-weather months? Do not rule out seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Between 6 percent and 8 percent of the U.S. population experience symptoms of wintertime light deprivation serious enough to warrant treatment. While no separate research on children exists, experts believe children suffer too, says Michael Young, Ph.D., associate professor of psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology in Chicago.

Those affected by SAD eat more, sleep more, and are generally unhappy during the light-starved winter months. Children might be overly sensitive to social rejection, uninterested in trying new activities, or unable to concentrate on homework. But diagnosis in children can be hard, says Dr. Young, because the school year—often an anxiety-provoking time—and the SAD season overlap. If your child’s problems start in October or November and seem to dissipate in March or April, the culprit may be a lack of natural light. The chances are higher if you live in northern climates, since SAD increases in areas far from the equator.

The good news: treatment, which is not difficult and has a very high success rate, is typically a daily session in front of a super-bright light box. The box should be used only with a doctor’s supervision. Much less often, drugs used to treat depression are prescribed. Dr. Young cautions parents not to treat without a diagnosis because occasionally the symptoms indicate something more serious. If you suspect SAD may be affecting your child, talk to your pediatrician. In the meantime, learn more about the condition from the Society for Light Treatment and Biological Rhythms at www.sltbr.org.

The Merits of Infant Massage

Infants who are massaged at bedtime are more likely to sleep well at night than babies who aren’t, according to research from Tel Aviv University and the University of Haifa in Israel. The massage therapy, which mothers provided for two weeks starting ten days after birth, appeared to help the newborns coordinate their biological clocks with their moms’ schedule, explains study author Sari Goldstein Ferber, Ph.D. At eight weeks, the babies who were massaged showed peak activity levels during the day, while those who were not massaged were most active at night. Researchers also found significantly higher production of melatonin, a sleep-regulating hormone, among the massaged infants.

Mission

To open “New Horizons” of self-esteem and potential for the little people entrusted to our care, their families, and our employees by providing and continuously improving the best child development on the planet!



