



PREVENTION MATTERS

THE CENTER FOR INJURY PREVENTION AND POLICY

Holiday Blues:

The holidays are ‘supposed’ to be full of joy, cheer, and happy memories. But unfortunately, this is not the case for everyone. Sometimes the holidays can make people remember the loved ones they have lost or the celebrations they can no longer enjoy the way they used to. This holiday season, we encourage you to remember those who may not be feeling as festive as you may expect. And if you find yourself suffering from the holiday blues, remember that the holidays are stressful for everyone and be sure to ask for help if you need it.



The National Alliance on Mental Illness defines the holiday blues as “temporary feelings of anxiety or depression during the holidays that can be associated with extra stress, unrealistic expectations or even memories that accompany the season”. Sometimes these feelings can lead to suicide but contrary to popular belief, **suicides do not increase dramatically over the holiday season.**

Why Does It Happen?



It takes our body a while to adjust after we turn our clocks back one hour.

Holiday celebrations can often involve alcohol. Alcohol only adds to feelings of depression.



As the year comes to a close, we can often find ourselves rushing from event to event.

The holiday season can be demanding and it is hard to keep up. Sometimes we have difficulty getting enough restful sleep.



We can often be pulled in many different directions and feel like we need to satisfy them all.

Holiday events often center around food and eating. Eating large amounts of unhealthy food can leave you feeling ill.



The holidays can create or worsen money problems. Many people feel pressured to give in ways that create debt and anxiety. This can lead to even more problems in the new year.

What Can I Do?

Try to keep the same routine. You can also wake up early to enjoy the morning. Consider taking a Vitamin D supplement to give your body what it is missing from spending time in the sun.



Remember to drink in moderation and remember to drink plenty of water. Also, never drink and drive.

Allow yourself to say “no”. Throw out the feelings that you *should* or you *must*. Really think about which events you actually want to attend.



Remember that sleep is just as important as the activities you feel like you *need* to go to.

Remember to make time for yourself and set clear limits.



Eat in moderation. If you are going to multiple events in one night, pace yourself. Or eat healthy food before you go out.

Create a budget for yourself well before the holidays. Spread out shopping and spending throughout the year. Suggest homemade gifts or spending limits in larger social circles.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON:

Center for Injury Prevention and Policy: umm.edu/CIPP
STC Prevention Matters: umm.edu/PreventionMatters

NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

16.2 million

people in the U.S. had at least one major episode of depression in the past year (Source: National Institute of Mental Health)

64%

of people report being affected by the holiday blues (Source: National Alliance on Mental Illness)



More than half of people reported being stressed about money during the holiday season (Principal Financial Well-Being Index: American Workers Report, 2017)

Suicide rates in the U.S. are actually the **lowest** during November, December and January



What about Seasonal Affective Disorder?

Seasonal Affective Disorder is now called Major Depressive Disorder with a Seasonal Pattern because its symptoms are the same as Clinical Depression.

If you tend to experience the same symptoms every year at the same time, this could be the reason. Most people tend to experience symptoms entering the winter months that can be confused with the Holiday Blues.

These symptoms can instead include oversleeping, craving “comfort foods”, weight gain, and very low energy.

The symptoms must happen for at least two years before a formal diagnosis can be considered but treatment options can include light therapy and/or medication.



When Do I Need Help?

- You feel sad or depressed for most of the day
- You don't find the same things fun or enjoyable
- You have lost a large amount of weight without trying or have gained a large amount of weight
- Your thoughts feel very slow or you start moving really slowly
- You feel worthless
- You can't concentrate or make decisions
- You can't stop thinking about death or wanting to kill yourself

Experiencing these things almost every day may be a serious sign of depression and you should seek professional help. You should also seek help if any of these things are interfering in your normal day to day life.

If the holiday season passes and you still feel down or worried, consider seeking help as well.

What Help Is Available?

You should always call 9-1-1 in life threatening emergencies.

Crisis hotlines are available to help people work their way through difficult times and towards safety.

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 1-800-662-HELP (4357)
- National Hopeline Network: 1-800- SUICIDE (784-2433)
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- National Youth Crisis Hotline: 1-800-448-4663
- Maryland's Crisis Connect: Call 2-1-1, Press 1



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