



Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), or Depression with Seasonal Pattern, is a condition that comes and goes based on seasonal changes, usually appearing in the fall and going away in the spring/summer. You can also get a mild version of SAD known as the “winter blues.” It’s normal to feel a little down during colder months. You may be stuck inside, and it gets dark early.

In Canada, SAD affects around 3% of Canadians each year, with approximately 15% experiencing milder forms of SAD. Canadians are particularly at risk, as we have decreased sunlight during the winter months.

Those who experience Seasonal Affective Disorder often deal with the following symptoms:

- Appetite changes, including increased cravings for sugary or starchy foods
- Avoidance of people or activities previously enjoyed
- Difficulty in concentrating
- Daytime fatigue
- Feeling tense or stressed
- Irritability
- Sense of hopelessness
- Weight gain

There are many ways to minimize the effects of SAD, including some of the following treatment and preventative methods to support yourself or family and friends dealing with Seasonal Affective Disorder symptoms.

Meet with a Healthcare Practitioner – SAD is a treatable disorder, so discussing medical treatment or support from a qualified healthcare practitioner can be a useful first step in identifying the ideal treatment option(s).

Light Therapy – Using light therapy has provided relief for 60% to 80% of people who suffer from SAD. Sitting for 30 minutes in front of a special fluorescent light that simulates natural outdoor light can help improve mood and energy levels.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – This therapy works to replace negative thoughts with positive thoughts. It can be used in conjunction with light therapy.

Self-help – Some self-help strategies include regular exercise, good sleeping habits, and healthy diet. It is also important to stay connected with family and friends to improve mood.

Some other everyday tips to ease winter SAD symptoms include:

- avoiding alcohol and being aware of your caffeine intake
- finding some time to get outside during the day
- keeping a journal to help you deal with any negative feelings
- resisting the urge to eat unhealthy, sugary or high carbohydrate foods
- taking vitamin D supplements or eating foods high in vitamin D.

For additional help and support, the following programs and services offered through the NSTU Group Insurance and Member Assistance Program (MAP) are available:

NSTU Member Assistance Program	Contact Information
NSTU Counselling Services	(902) 477-5621 1-800-565-6788
Employee and Family Assistance Program	1-877-955-6788 www.homeweb.ca
Carepath – Mental Health Program	1-844-453-6788 www.carepath.ca
Total Care Medical Plan – Psychologist Services – 80% of the usual and customary charges to a maximum of 20 visits per year.	Johnson Inc. (902) 453-9543 or 1-800-453-9543 (toll-free)

We trust the information outlined above is helpful. Please don’t forget to visit our website at www.nstuinsurance.ca to review the many benefits and programs available to you through the NSTU Group Insurance Plan.

NSTU Webmail

As you may be aware, the @nstu.ca email address will be phased out and go offline effective July 14, 2025. This will require those of you who use your @nstu email for this purpose to provide a new email address to Medavie Blue Cross as the insurer for your Total Care Medical and Total Care Dental benefit plans and Johnson Insurance as your group benefit plan administrator. The process to update your email address is as follows:

Medavie Blue Cross

As a NSTU plan member, you can update the email address for your existing MBC account by going through the Mobile App/Member Services Site under "My Account". **Please note, this is the only way to update your email address with Blue Cross, as calling them will require you to re-register / create a new account.**

Johnson Insurance

To change your email address with Johnson Insurance, you simply need to e-mail pbadminns@johnson.ca or call 1-800-453-9543 to advise of your new email address. **Please note, if sending an email, please ensure to include your certificate number and name in the body of the email.**