



Winterblues



In a strict sense winterblues refers to a **seasonal affective disorder**. It is characterised by one or more symptoms of tiredness, exhaustions, sleep problems, negative mood, craving for sweets and losing interest. It occurs mostly between autumn and spring, more often in women for those living in northern latitudes. However there are also so called **subsyndromal** forms. The most common recommendation is prevention by lifestyle changes. These can be easily applied, have only few side effects and promising positive effects.

Daylight and the biological clock

Our daily life is driven by an **inner biological clock**. The clock needs a certain amount of natural and bright (sun-)light. If there is not enough light, hormone levels can change. For example less light can increase the Melatonin level which can lead sleepiness and exhaustion. At the same time Serotonin level can be decreased which can be linked to social withdrawal and negative mood. Make sure to get enough light to influence your inner clock and your mood in a positive way. It is estimated that we need at least 2.000 lux for 30 minutes a day. **Outdoor** the illumination can range from 120.000 lux on a sunny summer day to 2.500 lux on a cloudy winter day. However, **indoor** we get approximately 500 lux if we sit next to a sunny window or have a well-lit office.

Recommendations

Most physicians treating seasonal affective disorders recommend to spend time more outdoor in natural (sun-)light. The best time to get daylight is in the early morning. To enhance the positive effect on mood, combine it with regular exercise. Additionally, keep a regular sleep-wake cycle and stay in contact with your family, friends and colleagues.

There are three things that are particularly important to prevent winterblues and enhance well-being:

1. **Get enough light.** Go outside for about 30 minutes even on a cloudy winter day.
2. **Exercise.** A moderate (aerobic) intensity for about 20 minutes daily is enough. Chose between walking, cycling, weight training, a team or ball sport e. g.
3. **Take care for your social network.** Support those around you. Find people that give the kind of support you need.

On the next side you find some short tips.

Spend as much time (inter-)actively outside as possible – especially in winter. Don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Dr. Sandra Waeldin & Team



Short-Tipps

In cooperation with:



Preferably:

- ☐ Exercise with a friend outside for 20–30 minutes every morning.

Alternatively:

- ☐ Go with a colleague for a walk after lunch.
- ☐ Have a walk and call a friend on the way.
- ☐ Bicycle to work, supermarket ...
- ☐ Walk an additional round before you get home.
- ☐ Go to the animal shelter and take dogs for a walk.
- ☐ Ask your friends, family and colleagues how they are.
- ☐ Try a new sport or hobby and find a buddy to share.
- ☐ Find new local groups (if you have to: start digitally).
- ☐ Use social media or apps in a targeted manner.
(avoid social comparison, use apps like “meetup”,
“buddy me” to find local events, groups or people).
- ☐ Ask others for a pleasant favour.
(it increases sympathy, “Benjamin Franklin effect”)

I plan to do:

What?

When?

Efficacy of light therapy:

Golden, R. N., Gaynes, B. N., Ekstrom, R. D., Hamer, R. M., Jacobsen, F. M., Suppes, T., ... & Nemeroff, C. B. (2005). The efficacy of light therapy in the treatment of mood disorders: a review and meta-analysis. *Am J Psychiat*, 162(4), 656–662.

Nussbaumer–Streit, B., Winkler, D., Spies, M., Kasper, S., & Pjrek, E. (2017). Prevention of seasonal affective disorder in daily clinical. *BMC psychiatry*, 17(1), 247. DOI:10.1186/s12888-017-1403-2

Stathopoulou, G., Powers, M. B., Berry, A. C., Smits, J. A. J., & Otto, M. W. (2006). Exercise Interventions for Mental Health: Review. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 13(2), 179–193. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2850.2006.00021.x

