

Blue Cross® VIRTUAL WELL-BEING

Keeping employees motivated and productive

Some people struggle with the winter blues, but a small group of people actually have a diagnosed condition called seasonal affective disorder. What's the difference, and how can you help your employees stay productive through the winter?

With the winter blues, you may feel more lethargic and gloomy than usual, but it doesn't affect your ability to enjoy life. SAD is more life-altering. According to the Cleveland Clinic, only 1% to 2% of the population is affected by SAD, but about 10% to 20% of Americans may have the winter blues. SAD affects women more than men. With SAD, you may have two or more weeks of depressed mood and symptoms such as:

- Sleeping more than usual
- Loss of interest
- Increased appetite
- Withdrawal from social occasions
- Thoughts of hopelessness

If you think you may have SAD, talk to your doctor. Don't self-diagnose or self-treat.



As an employer, there are some things you can do in your office to help your employees weather the winter and keep their productivity up. These include:

- Make environmental changes, such as opening the blinds to let sunlight in and keeping the office warm.
- Offer social opportunities and encourage your employees to connect to help elevate their moods. Ask your employees to eat lunch together, or schedule a 15-minute recess for employees to move around and socialize.
- Take care of the mind and body by offering meditation sessions or desk yoga, or providing healthy snacks in the office.
- Give the gift of time. If allowed, let your employees work from home in bad weather, or let them leave early once in a while so they can drive home while the sun is still out.

You can also encourage your employees to care for themselves outside of work to lessen the effect of winter on their bodies and minds. Here are some suggestions:

- Get outside whenever you can.
- Modify your activities.
- Plan regular social activities.
- Check your vitamin levels.
- Keep a sleep schedule.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Stimulate your senses.
- Nurture your spirit.

Sources: [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org)*, [clevelandclinic.org](https://www.clevelandclinic.org)*, [webmd.com](https://www.webmd.com)*, [apa.org](https://www.apa.org)*

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