



Safety Message of the Day for IMEA Members



Seasonal Affective Disorder Safety Message

Winter blues, another name for seasonal affective disorder (SAD), is a form of depression that has a seasonal pattern which can start in fall and last until spring. As the days get shorter and colder, the lack of sunlight can leave you feeling sad, low energy or you may experience changes in sleep and eating habits (usually wanting to sleep and eat more) and the desire to isolate. SAD is more than just "winter blues." The symptoms can be distressing, overwhelming and can interfere with daily function and create safety hazards for you and your coworkers.

Fortunately, there are several steps you can take to help prevent this disorder, beginning with certain lifestyle changes. There are seven different aspects of well-being, and you can focus on making changes in each during the seven months of fall and winter:

Physical – Maintaining your level of exercise and a healthy balanced diet are great ways to elevate your mood and energy levels throughout the winter months. It is also important to regulate your sleep patterns; avoid sleeping during the day and avoid overindulging in caffeine and alcohol. Smile! Your smile can lift your mood as well as the mood of others.

Emotional – Keep a gratitude journal. It's easy to get sucked into all the parts of the day that aren't perfect. Instead, make a point to write down what you're grateful for each day.

Social – Make an effort to keep socializing in a safe way. During COVID-19, many people are feeling isolated - especially older adults. Maintain social relationships by making a phone call, setting up a video chat, sending a letter or even writing a few quick text messages. Checking in on other people can help boost both your spirits and theirs.

Intellectual – We can all think of reasons why we shouldn't get something done, but creating and sticking to a schedule can help you avoid isolation and dwelling on things that make you feel down.

Spiritual – Be mindful of this moment. Instead of focusing on the negative aspects of winter, embrace the season and find things you like about it.

Environmental– Get outside! Even if it's only for a few minutes, the fresh air and sunshine can help you feel refreshed. Light bulbs that emit a certain wavelength that mimic the vitamin D in sunlight can also be helpful to use periodically.

Vocational – Focus on the positive and try to manage your stress. Do something that relaxes you, like reading a book or taking a bath.