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**Altenheim Resource Services**

Empowering older adults and caregivers through information, education, and support  
Contact us with questions about aging or caregiving issues

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It's cloudy again today. It's cold outside. It's snowing (or raining) again. Sitting by the fire, drinking hot chocolate and reading a book or watching TV while you snuggle in your favorite soft blanket may seem like the best way to spend your day. Do you really just hate winter, or do you suffer from SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder)?

SAD is a type of depression that's related to the change in seasons. It happens just about the same time every year when daylight is less during the winter months. Sometimes it can linger through spring. The [Mayo Clinic](#) has an excellent article on the causes of SAD and what you can do about it.

How do you know if you have SAD or if something else is wrong? The best way is to talk with your primary care physician or a mental health provider. A professional can determine if you have a different kind of depression or another mental health problem or even a medical condition that can be causing depression. The Cleveland Clinic tells us that about 5% of adults suffer from SAD. Another 10% to 20% may develop a milder form of "winter blues." Women are more affected than men and it rarely happens under the age of 20. This [Cleveland Clinic](#) article discusses symptoms, diagnosis and treatment of SAD.

The National Institute of Mental Health also has some great resources. One that is particularly helpful is an easy-to-read [Infographic](#) helping you decide when symptoms are serious enough to seek professional help. It also provides practical suggestions to try that may help you snap out of the SAD depression. If you are looking for something that is more visual, NIMH has posted a presentation by [Dr. Matt Rudorfer](#), a psychiatrist at NIMH.

For those afflicted by SAD there is hope! Spring is just 47 days away! The hours of daylight will be getting longer as we approach the Spring Equinox and even longer approaching the Summer Solstice. Daylight Savings Time begins March 10. Those extra hours of daylight at the end of the day are welcomed by many people.

Today is February 2 and it's traditionally known as Groundhog Day. If you don't suffer from SAD and just really hate winter, Groundhog Day is halfway between the first day of winter and the first day of spring. There's more to the tradition than just waiting for the groundhog to show his face and decide if spring will come early. Read more about the traditions on [History Channel](#) or in this article from [Reader's Digest](#). Whether or not the groundhog sees his shadow we still have six more weeks of winter. Let's hope it is a mild six weeks so that our friends and neighbors with SAD will be able to get out, interact with others and reduce the effects of SAD.