

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER (S.A.D.)

A Guide to S.A.D. Causes,
Symptoms and Solutions



WHAT IS SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER?

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a type of depression tied to seasonal changes, most commonly in winter.

In Taranaki, winter's shorter days and frequent cloudy weather can contribute to SAD.

14 hours and 44 minutes

New Plymouth longest day
14h and 44m of daylight

9 hours and 15 minutes

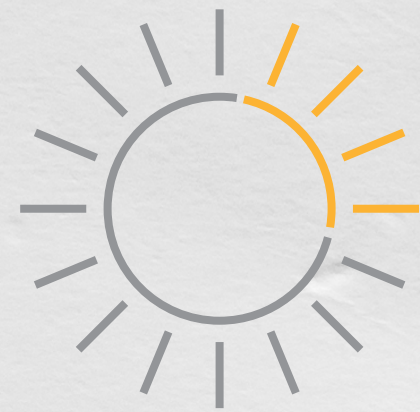
Shortest day has around
9h and 15m of day light

Our shortest day is only 45 mins longer than the standard 8.5 hour shift

2-8%
of New Zealanders

Seasonal Affective Disorder affects 2-8% of New Zealanders, with higher rates in regions like Taranaki due to its temperate, often overcast climate.

CAUSES OF SEASONAL DEPRESSION



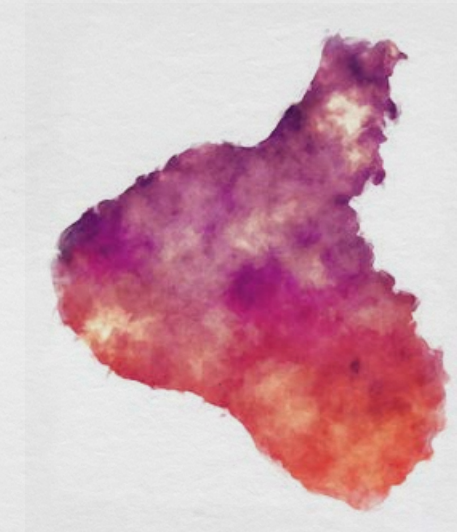
Reduced sunlight

Taranaki's winter, with frequent rain and cloud cover, limits daylight exposure, disrupting circadian rhythm.



Biological factors

Lower serotonin level (mood regulator) and higher melatonin (sleep hormone) due to less sunlight.



Cultural and environmental factors

Rural lifestyle, isolation in some Taranaki areas may influence emotional responses to seasons.

SYMPTOMS OF S.A.D.

Common symptoms

- ▶ Persistent sadness, irritability, or low energy.
- ▶ Oversleeping, fatigue, or carbohydrate cravings.
- ▶ Difficulty focusing or withdrawing from social activities.

Summer SAD

- ▶ While less common can include Insomnia, agitation, or weight loss.

Winter-specific in Taranaki

- ▶ Increased lethargy due to cold, damp weather.
- ▶ Social withdrawal, especially in rural areas with fewer community events in winter.

WHO IS AT RISK?

Demographics

- ▶ More common in women (4:1 ratio compared to men).
- ▶ Affects adults, particularly those in rural or isolated areas.

Regional factors

- ▶ Taranaki's latitude means shorter winter days, increasing risk.
- ▶ Farming communities and shift workers (e.g., in oil and gas industries) may face higher risks due to irregular schedules.

Cultural factors

- ▶ Māori and Pasifika populations may experience unique stressors tied to seasonal changes and cultural responsibilities.



DIAGNOSIS AND PROFESSIONAL HELP

Diagnosis

- ▶ Symptoms must occur for two consecutive winters (or summers) and not be due to other causes.
- ▶ Assessed via clinical interviews or questionnaires by health professionals.

Local Resources

- ▶ Building Wellness
- ▶ GPs and HIPs
- ▶ Māori health providers like Tui Ora.

MANAGEMENT OPTIONS



Lifestyle changes

Exercise, healthy diet, and maximising natural light.



Light therapy

Use a 10,000-lux light box for 20-30 minutes daily.



Counselling

Available through TPC, Tui Ora or private therapists.



Medications

Antidepressants (e.g., SSRIs) prescribed by GPs for severe cases.

GLOBAL AWARENESS

In 2016 The Yukon Department of Health and Social Services' "we all need the D" campaign, using a common slang term quickly went viral and spawned giggly dismay across social media...

...despite the embarrassment caused by the original campaign, the department maintained that it had left them more than satisfied.



SELF-HELP AND PREVENTION



Maximise light exposure

- ▶ Open curtains during daylight hours, walk one of our regions beautiful walks.



Maintain a routine

- ▶ Consistent sleep and exercise, especially important for shift workers.



Community connection

- ▶ Engage in local events, participation in friend and whānau gatherings .



Mindfulness

- ▶ Practices like meditation.

Conclusion

SAD is a real and treatable condition.
Local resources and community support are available



➡ **Tui Ora Mental
Wellbeing
Kaiārahi
Service**

0800 TUI ORA



➡ **Building
Wellness**

help@buildingwellness.co.nz



➡ **Healthline NZ**
0800 611 116



➡ **1737**
free text 1737

➡ **Health Improvement
Practitioners (HIP)**

via the individual's GP practice

➡ **Taranaki Primary
Connections**

via the individual's GP practice

www.besafe.nz

