

THINK HEALTHY!

Français au verso
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THE FAMILY
HEALTH NEWSLETTER

Seasonal Affective Disorder 15% of Canadians suffer from “Winter Blues”

Weather often affects people’s moods. Sunlight breaking through clouds can lift our spirits, while a dull, rainy day may make us feel a little gloomy. Some people, however, are vulnerable to a type of depression that follows a seasonal pattern. For them, the shortening days of late autumn are the beginning of a type of clinical depression that can last until spring. This condition is called “Seasonal Affective Disorder”, or SAD. A mild form of SAD, often referred to as the “winter blues”, causes discomfort, but is not incapacitating.

Many people with SAD may not be aware that it exists or that help is available.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

SAD can be difficult to diagnose, since many of the symptoms are similar to those of other types of depression or bipolar disorder. Even physical conditions, such as thyroid problems, can look like depression. Generally, symptoms that recur for at least 2 consecutive winters, without any other explanation for the changes in mood and behaviour, indicate the presence of SAD. These may include:

- change in appetite, in particular a craving for sweet or starchy foods
- weight gain
- decreased energy
- fatigue
- tendency to oversleep
- difficulty concentrating
- irritability
- avoidance of social situations
- feelings of anxiety and despair



Source: Canadian Mental Health Association

THINK HEALTHY! is a bilingual newsletter published 5 times a year by Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence with the aim of transmitting information to individuals and families on health and to better understand services offered to the population, especially to anglophones. It is distributed in the areas served by Rimouski Hospital, including the Lower Saint Lawrence, Baie-des-Chaleurs, Gaspésie, North Shore and the Lower North Shore. The newsletters are made possible through funding by Health Canada for Community Health and Social Services Network (CHSSN), via its Networking and Partnership Initiative Program (NPI) and its Community Health Promotion Project (CHPP). For more information, do not hesitate to contact Marie-Glaude Giroux at 418-936-3239 or mcgiroux@heritagelsl.ca.

HOW IS SAD TREATED?

If you feel depressed for long periods during autumn and winter, if your sleep and appetite patterns change dramatically and you find yourself thinking about suicide, you should seek professional help, for example, from your family doctor. There is effective treatment for SAD. Even people with severe symptoms can get rapid relief once they begin treatment.

To ease mild symptoms:

- Spend more time outdoors during the day
- Arrange your environments so that you receive maximum sunlight: trim tree branches that block light, keep curtains open during the day, move furniture so that you sit near a window. Installing skylights and adding lamps can also help.
- Exercise relieves stress, builds energy and increases your mental and physical wellbeing.

Build physical activity into your lifestyle before SAD symptoms take hold

- If you exercise indoors, position yourself near a window
- Make a habit of taking a daily noon-hour walk
- Activity and increased exposure to natural light can raise your spirits.

Many people with SAD respond well to exposure to bright, artificial light. "Light therapy", involves sitting beside a special fluorescent light box for several minutes day. A healthcare professional should be consulted before beginning light therapy. For people who are more severely affected by SAD, antidepressant medications are safe and effective in relieving symptoms. Counselling and therapy, especially short-term treatments such as cognitive-behavioural therapy, may also be helpful for winter depression.

Useful Web Address

The Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA) is a nation-wide, voluntary organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness. CMHA accomplishes this mission through advocacy, education, research and service.

For further information* about seasonal affective disorder, contact CMHA:

Visit the CMHA website at www.cmha.ca today or telephone **514.849.3291**

***If you or someone you know is in crisis and needs immediate assistance, go to the nearest hospital or call 9-1-1.**



Canadian Mental
Health Association
Mental health for all

WHO IS AT RISK?

Research in Ontario suggests that between 2% and 3% of Canadians may have SAD. Another 15% have a less severe experience described as the "winter blues."

SAD may affect some children and teenagers, but it tends to begin in people over the age of 20. The risk of SAD decreases with age. The condition is more common in women than in men.

Recent studies suggest that SAD is more common in northern countries, where the winter day is shorter. People with SAD find that spending time in a southerly location brings them relief from their symptoms.

Stay Active, Stay Healthy!

Outdoor physical activity is a great way to prevent SAD or ease mild symptoms. What are some good activities? Write **active** or **not active** under each picture.



Improving Access to Health and Social Services in English



For several years, *l'Agence de la santé et des services sociaux du Bas-Saint-Laurent* (the Lower Saint Lawrence Health and Social Services Agency) has been working closely with a number of regional partners including Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence and the Networking and Partnership Initiative. These organisations work together in order to ensure that the English-speaking population has access to the most extensive range of health and social services, in English, that is possible at the facilities in their community.

Over recent months, the regional committee has taken the time to reflect, to revisit and to rethink our service offer to the anglophone population of the Lower Saint Lawrence region, as well as those of the North Shore and Gaspésie. It is through the *Plan d'accès en langue anglaise 2012* (English Language Access Plan 2012) that the regional committee determined the principal areas of intervention where our efforts should be focused. They are as follows:

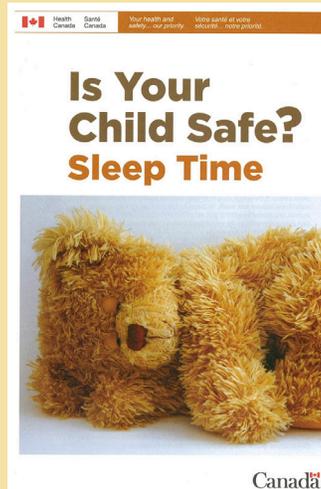
- To identify the characteristics of the English-speaking community in the region, including their specific health and social services needs;
- To determine which health and social services are required to meet these needs;
- To indicate which service providers should offer health and social services in English;
- To establish access to health and social services in English.

Regarding the newly identified guidelines, a number of new projects have taken flight allowing the English-speaking community of the Lower Saint Lawrence to receive a wider range of services and activities linked to health. It is for this reason that our warmest thanks go to Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence, the community organisation responsible putting in place these activities. Through their energy and passion, these partners have succeeded in creating and running activities that have contributed towards the collective wellbeing, mental health, physical activity, and all with the aim of meeting your needs.

In conclusion, we are a proud to be a part of this initiative and wish to continue on this path over the next year in order to ensure the wellbeing of the English-speaking community of the Lower Saint Lawrence.

**For questions or comments,
contact Annick Lepage at the ASSS on 418.724.8490**

Children are naturally curious and do not easily recognize and avoid hazards; this is why they need extra protection and care. Many injuries can be avoided by supervising children carefully and by making their surroundings safer.



Here are two new pamphlets produced by Health Canada and available at the Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence offices (**418-936-3239**). These booklets advise regarding the different dangers found in the home, at bedtime and at playtime. These documents and more are available online at **www.health.gc.ca/cps**.



HERITAGE
Lower Saint Lawrence
Bas-Saint-Laurent

Heritage Lower Saint Lawrence is an organisation dedicated to promoting anglophone culture and improving the health of the English-speaking community.

If you need assistance in obtaining English-language services, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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Health Directory now online