



MEDIA RELEASE

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Keep your mental health well as winter darkness approaches

The clocks go back this Sunday (28 October), a significant landmark in the reduction of daylight hours. For those with seasonal affective disorder, this reduction of daylight can have a profound impact on their mental health.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a recognised mental health condition, which takes the form of depression. In the UK, about 3 people in every 100 will have significant winter depression.

Those with the condition may have low mood and find they cannot enjoy life. They may also want to sleep more and eat more.

Although we can do nothing about the amount of daylight in the winter months, there are steps those with the condition can take to minimise its effect.

Dr Fabida Noushad (pictured), consultant psychiatrist at Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, said: "Many of us are affected by the change in seasons. It is normal to feel more cheerful and energetic when the days are longer, or to find that you eat more or sleep longer in winter.

"However, if you experience SAD, the change in seasons will have a much greater effect on your mood and energy levels, and lead to symptoms of depression that may have a significant impact on your day-to-day life.

"SAD is more common in countries like the UK, where we have large changes in daylight hours in the different seasons."

Dr Noushad said there were many steps those with SAD could take to minimise its effects. These include:



- making the most of natural light – going outside at midday, painting your home with reflective brighter colours, and wearing sunglasses less;
- avoiding stress;
- building a support network of friends and health professionals;
- exercising and eating well – including plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables;
- trying to walk during daylight hours;
- reminding yourself that it will get better in spring;
- visiting somewhere with more light – a winter holiday to somewhere sunnier may make you feel better, although it may make the contrast seem greater when you return home; and
- considering using a light box – a special device which you can plug in at home – or a special “dawn simulating” alarm clock which gradually introduces more light into the bedroom.

If you have significant symptoms, please visit your GP.

For more information on SAD, go to: <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/seasonal-affective-disorder-sad/#.W8X649dKhD4> or <https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsanddisorders/seasonal-affective-disorder.aspx> .

This advice has been issued as part of the Help Us, Help You campaign by NHS and social care partners in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust (LPT) provides community health, mental health and learning disabilities services for the one million people living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. We have a budget in excess of £275 million and employ approximately 5,500 staff. For more information visit: www.leicspart.nhs.uk
2. Raising Health is our registered charity (number 1057361) which raises funds to support LPT’s excellent care initiatives, equipment and innovations which go above and beyond core NHS provision, to enhance the experience of our patients, service users and staff. www.raisinghealth.org.uk .