MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

BCHC Buchanan County Health Center

Senior Solutions

# THE WINTER BLUES & YOU!

It's not uncommon for people to feel down during the winter months. We miss the sun, the outdoors, and our friends. In some cases, depression during can set in. This type of depression is called seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and is often referred to as the "winter blues."

## What are the winter blues?

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is a type of depression related to changes in seasons. It begins and ends at about the same times every year. If you're like most people your symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, sapping your energy and making you feel moody. These symptoms often resolve during the spring and summer months, according to the *Mayo Clinic*.

Learn more about the symptoms of winter blues, who's at risk, and ways to help prevent it on the next page.

## What are the symptoms of the winter blues?

- feeling depressed most of the day, nearly every day
- losing interest in activities you once enjoyed
- having low energy
- having problems with sleeping
- loss of appetite or eating more than usual feeling sluggish or agitated
- having difficulty concentrating
- feeling hopeless, worthless, or guilty
- having frequent thoughts of death or suicide

## Who's at risk for the winter blues?

At least 25% of the population are affected by the winter blues, but the *Centers for Disease Control* identified certain populations at higher risk:

- those who have a family history of mental illness
- those who have major depression or bipolar disorder.
- women
- immigrants
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer populations (LGBTQ+)

## Can the winter blues be prevented?

If you think you might be at risk for winter blues, you can take steps to prevent them using these tips from the *Mayo Clinic*:

- **Spend time outside.** It seems the song "You are My Sunshine" was right! Spending time outside increases your exposure to light and allows you to absorb more vitamin D. Like the song says, the sun will "make you happy when skies are gray."
- **Find ways to move.** Movement is a good way to battle depression any time of year which is why the *Mayo Clinic* recommends you move daily. This could be going for a walk, do some gentle stretching, or even chair yoga. A healthy body helps create a healthy mind.
- **Brighten your nest.** It may not always be realistic to be outside when temperatures drop. But you can make the inside more cheerful with bright light bulbs, open curtains, or even a light box that simulates the sunrise.
- **Keep in touch.** Reach out to your friends and loved ones in person, with a phone or other device. If you need to socially distance, use Facetime or Zoom to connect virtually.

***If you feel like you are at risk for the winter blues or depression, speak to your provider or a member of our team. We are here to help.***

## WE CAN HELP.

Our program is designed to meet the unique needs of older adults experiencing depression and/or anxiety related to life changes that are often associated with aging. Anyone can make a referral to our program, including self-referrals, provider referrals, or community referrals.

**Call us today at 319-332-0130**