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Looking after your mental health in the winter months



Shorter, colder days can significantly affect mood, motivation, and mental well-being. Around 3% of UK adults (approximately 1 in 20) experience winter seasonal affective disorder (SAD), with over 2 million people affected each year.¹

Winter at work

A recent UK survey found that over two-thirds of workers feel less productive during winter, with 30% reporting a notable drop in productivity.²

So, what are the signs that your mental health may be suffering in the winter, and how can you look after your mental health?

Signs that your mental health may be suffering in winter

For some people, winter can be a time when their mental health feels worse. Fewer hours of daylight, long nights, bad weather and reduced activity can all contribute to lower mood at this time of year.

If you've noticed that you're feeling a bit low, less enthusiastic or you've lost your sense of humour then this may indicate that you're feeling the effects of weather.

Other signs can include:

- Persistent low mood, irritability, tearfulness
- Lack of enthusiasm or energy, fatigue
- Overeating or appetite changes
- Trouble concentrating or feeling worthless
- Social withdrawal, low self-esteem

These may indicate SAD or a winter-related dip in mental health



How to Support Yourself

Be proactive with these evidence-based steps:

Get active

Try a brisk walk, light exercise, or bike ride in daylight. Even short periods improve mood and lessen anxiety.

Spend time outdoors mindfully

Notice nature: the cold air, sounds, birdsong. Mindfulness reduces stress and boosts presence. Greet others—it lifts both of your moods.

Stay connected & help others

Call a friend or set up a virtual coffee. Small acts—like delivering flowers or groceries—boost well-being for everyone.

Engage in hobbies

Do things you enjoy, like reading, baking, yoga, music, or puzzles. These activities trigger happy hormones and create something to look forward to.

Limit negative news & screen time

Check news just once daily. Trim social media ties that drag your mood. Try a “digital detox” during gloomy days.

Prioritise sleep

Keep a consistent sleep routine. Streamline your evenings: reduce screen usage, avoid alcohol, and wind down earlier.

Increase exposure to light

Open curtains, sit near windows, or try a light therapy lamp to boost serotonin and regulate sleep cycles.



Why talking about your mental health matters

It's common to wonder if your feelings are “serious enough” or to worry about being judged. You might tell yourself that other people have it worse, or that you should just “get on with it.”

But talking about your mental health can:

- Ease the pressure and stop thoughts from going round in circles
- Help you feel less alone
- Make it easier to spot patterns and triggers
- Open the door to practical support and treatment

When you feel safe to talk, you're more likely to get help early—before things build up or start to affect your sleep, work, or relationships.

How Stigma Can Stop You Asking for Help

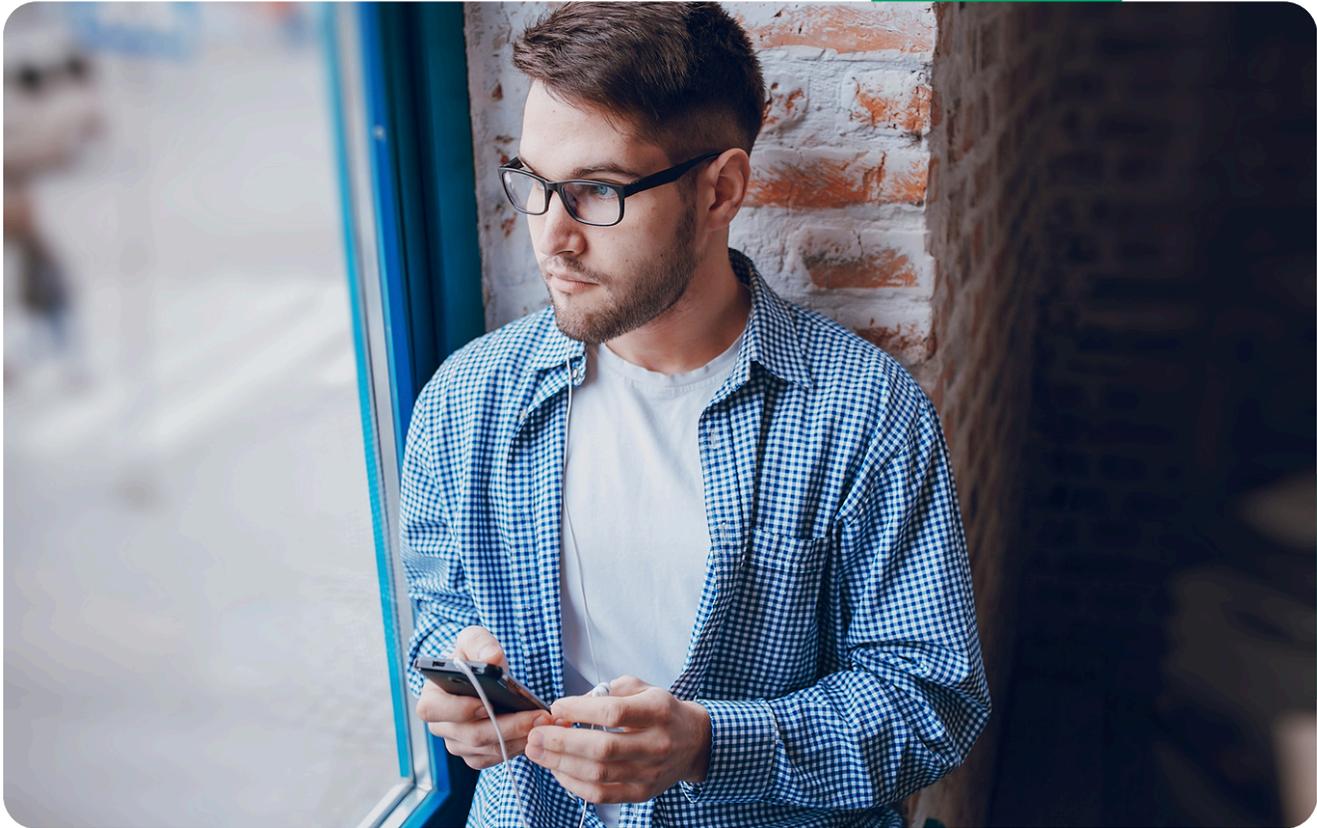
Even though mental health is talked about more than it used to be, stigma is still a real problem. Misunderstandings and outdated ideas can make it harder to reach out.

You might worry that:

- People will see you as “weak” if you ask for support.
- Your feelings will be dismissed.
- Talking about mental health could affect how others see you.

In reality, many people struggle at different points in life. Anxiety, low mood, stress, burnout, or trouble sleeping are all common—and valid reasons to seek help.

Confidential, professional support is there to listen without judgement and help you find a way forward.



Online Mental Health Appointments Make It Easier to Talk

Online mental health appointments remove many barriers to getting support. You can talk from a place where you feel safe and comfortable, without needing to travel or sit in a waiting room.

Online appointments can help if you:

- Find it hard to fit in-person appointments around work or childcare
- Feel anxious about going to a clinic
- Prefer to talk from home or another private space
- Want quick access without a long wait

Many people find it easier to open up when they're in a familiar environment, using their own phone, tablet, or laptop.

If you're finding things difficult, booking an online mental health appointment can be a simple, discreet first step.

If you're struggling

Winter can worsen existing mental health issues. If signs like fatigue, low mood, or social withdrawal persist, consider reaching out to a trusted colleague, line manager, HR, or a mental health professional.

How can Doctor Care Anywhere help



24/7 GP and ACP Appointments

- Same-day virtual consultations.
- Instant access to medical advice, prescriptions, and fit notes.
- Available anytime, from home, the office, or on the go.



Mental Health Services

- Confidential sessions with mental health practitioners.
- Early intervention for anxiety, stress, and low mood.
- Assessment, treatment and support, including access to therapy and digital health tools.



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