

EDITORIAL

Here is ruska and kaamos again

When the leaves die there is *ruska*, and when the day dies there is *kaamos*. Autumn and wintertime weigh heavy, and many experience a negative change in mood that is also reflected in behaviour. However, current self-care options are many and easily available to anyone who experiences these seasonal symptoms as a problem.

I list the following self-care options, which are based on scientific findings and will enable each reader to tailor individual programmes. They are ordered in the form of, and embedded in, the acronym LADIES, which we hope will help in recall. So, ladies (and of course gentlemen as well), please have a look and take action. Reading is not enough: these principles need to be put into practice.

L: Light (exposure)

Spend more time outdoors during the day, and try to arrange your environment and schedule, if feasible, to maximize sunlight exposure. Keep curtains open during the day. Move furniture so that you can sit near a window or, if you exercise indoors, set up your equipment by a window. Identify artificial lighting that is designed to produce light bright enough at public places, inside or outdoors, where available. Add and switch on lamps at home. Select, read the instructions and use a bright light therapy lamp or a dawn simulator, if needed, to alleviate symptoms.

A: Activities (contact)

Keep in contact with your family members, relatives, neighbours, working partners, friends and significant others. Plan at least three social activities each month.

D: D vitamin (diet)

Eat with care. Ensure that you take in enough vitamin D from your food. You can get good value for money by eating more fruit and vegetables. Try to avoid sweet foods in particular and heavy meals in general after 6 p.m. to avoid weight gain.

I: Infrared (warm up)

Keep yourself warm during the day. Take a shower or a bath, or go to a sauna or a spa. It is your choice. Put on socks of wool and gloves of cotton to help in falling asleep in the evening.

E: Exercise (body and brain)

Build physical activity into your lifestyle, preferably before symptoms take hold, since physical activity and exercise enhance sleep, increase both physical and mental well-being and support resilience. If possible, make a habit of taking a daily lunchtime walk.

S: Sleep (tight!)

Keep your bedtime as regular as you can. Add three new stress management skills to your arsenal. Learn to perform any routine in the evening that does not activate but quietens your thoughts early enough before your habitual bedtime.

When all else fails, try a winter vacation in sunnier climes if your financial situation and social schedule allow, although keep in mind that symptoms may recur after your return home. Make a list of past symptoms, or a trigger list, and share it with someone. When at home, work at satisfying your hunger for light and resist your craving for carbohydrates. You may also commit to a course of action that you will definitely take, like seeing your doctor, if your state of mood exceeds a limit on three or more days in a week.

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