

# See the Light

## Escaping the winter blues with heavenly sunshine

It's that time of year again. Every winter as the weather starts to change, you begin to feel down.

You're not quite sure why, but you just don't have the same energy or enthusiasm as you do in the summertime.

If you dread the cold winter months, you're not alone. Sunlight changes cause seasonal depression in thirty million Americans. These "winter blues" can even be so extreme in some people that they cause severe depression. These symptoms are brought on because the body's clock malfunctions.

### How the body works

The pineal gland is a pea-sized organ buried in the brain. This gland stimulates feelings of tiredness by releasing melatonin. Your moods, hunger, and metabolism are also influenced by the pineal gland.

Dr. Al Dewy, MD, Ph.D., Professor of Ophthalmology and Psychiatry at the Oregon Health Science University, Portland, OR, discovered that very bright lights can actually change the time when the melatonin is released.

The timing of secretion of melatonin is commonly used as a marker for the body's clock. But the lights need to be much brighter than normal room lighting.

### 30 minutes of magic

By getting thirty to sixty minutes of morning sunlight on your hands and face, you can help correct winter depression. This may seem like a large amount of time spent outside so consider walking. Or if you need to do some office work, take your papers and books outside.

If you know of a friend or coworker who feels the same way, invite them to join you outside. You will both feel reinvigorated from each other's company and the sunlight. The winter doesn't have to be your enemy. Know what causes your "blues" and let the sunshine in.