



## JBT Health & Wellness Center

### **PLEASE READ THIS HANDOUT PRIOR TO USING the HappyLight LAMP.**

#### **What is light therapy?**

Bright white fluorescent light has been shown to reverse the winter depressive symptoms of Winter Blues and SAD (formerly called Seasonal Affective Disorder, now known as “depression with seasonal pattern”). *See next page for details on Winter Blues and SAD.*

Light therapy can be used for several purposes besides SAD. It can be used for those with mild symptoms of winter mood changes including lethargy, carbohydrate craving, weight gain and lack of motivation, but not necessarily depression.

#### **How should I use light therapy?**

- Standard dose: 10,000 lux for 20-30 minutes a day (morning is the best time).
- Use light therapy prior to 1pm. Using light therapy after 1pm may contribute to insomnia.
- Response usually starts in a few days, but is only maintained with daily use.
- Looking at the light is not recommended. Instead, orient the head and body toward the lights, concentrating on surfaces illuminated by the lights. The Verilux HappyLight Lamp recommends positioning the lamp as close as 6 inches, but within 24 inches of your face, slightly-off center. ***Do not stare directly at the light.***

#### **Side Effects/Cautions:**

- Use under the direction of a health care provider.
- Those with serious symptoms of depression should consult a health care provider before using light treatment and use it only under their care.
- Light therapy is generally safe. If side effects occur they are usually mild and short lasting and may include: eyestrain, headache, nausea, irritability or agitation- feeling “wired”, insomnia.
- Light therapy may trigger mania, euphoria, agitation, insomnia, and hyperactivity in some people with bipolar disorder. *If you have been diagnosed with, or are concerned that you have bipolar disorder, please get advice from your doctor before starting therapy.*
- If you have a dermatologic condition or are taking a medication that causes sensitivity to light, please talk with your doctor prior to use.
- If you have an eye condition that makes your eyes vulnerable to light (e.g. retinal disorder), please talk with your doctor prior to use.

**If you have any concerns about how light therapy may be affecting your mood or thoughts, seek medical help right away.**

## Common reasons to use light therapy:

### Winter Blues

The “Winter Blues” is common, with many people experiencing a change in mood during the colder, darker days of winter. You may find yourself feeling more lethargic and down overall. There can be problems with sleeping, feeling less social, and difficulty with motivation. Light therapy has been shown to help improve winter blues symptoms.

In addition to light therapy, there are other things you can do to combat the winter blues. Get out in the sunlight (when available) or brightly lit spaces. Go to bed and to sleep at the same time every day to normalize your circadian rhythms. Exercise regularly (outdoor sports!), spend time with other people, and avoid overindulging in carbohydrates.

The winter blues do not hinder your ability to enjoy life and function. However, a more serious condition is Seasonal Affective Disorder (now known as “depression with seasonal pattern”).

### Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) – now known as “depression with seasonal pattern”

People with depression with seasonal pattern lose steam when the days get shorter and the nights get longer. Symptoms include loss of pleasure, sadness, changes in appetite, eating more, craving carbohydrates, sleep changes (sleeping too much), loss of energy or fatigue, and trouble concentrating. Symptoms resolve in the spring when the light increases.

Symptoms can be more severe, including difficulty functioning on a day-to-day basis, and thoughts of death or suicide. Those with such serious symptoms of depression should consult a health care provider before starting light treatment and only use it under their care.

*It is best to be under the care of a health care provider while using light therapy, and it is always a good idea to talk to a health care provider before starting light therapy.*

## Questions or Concerns?

Make an appointment at  
JBT Health & Wellness Center and  
talk with us about light therapy!

**503-494-8665, option 1**

### Sources:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/light-therapy/about/pac-20384604>

[https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter\\_article/bright\\_light\\_therapy\\_for\\_seasonal\\_affective\\_disorder](https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/bright_light_therapy_for_seasonal_affective_disorder)

<https://www.rush.edu/health-wellness/discover-health/more-just-winter-blues>