

5 Surprising Ways Shorter Days Affect Your Brain



Changes in metabolism

With less access to natural light, your brain sends signals to your body to conserve energy, slowing down your metabolism and increasing your hunger.



Shorter attention span

Limiting light exposure can impact your hypothalamus, the part of your brain responsible for sleep and circadian rhythm. This decreases alertness and overall cognitive function.

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Change in mood

Darkness decreases your levels of serotonin and dopamine in the brain, which can lead to emotional shifts and even depression.



Fatigue

The hormone melatonin, which helps to regulate circadian rhythm, is produced in darkness or dim light conditions. When melatonin is overproduced during darker days, people can feel more lethargic.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

During darker seasons, people with SAD may experience decreased energy levels, sleep pattern disruption, trouble focusing, social withdrawal and overeating. If you notice these persistent symptoms, consult your physician about your treatment options.

6 Ways to Adapt

1 Exercise



Working out releases endorphins that activate your metabolic activity, helping to boost your mood as well as combat depression and anxiety.

4 Eat mindfully



Your body naturally craves high-sugar and high-carbohydrate foods when you are tired and looking for quick energy. Get ahead of the cravings with a proactive plan to eat nutrient-rich foods, and avoid eating too late.

2 Limit the blue light



Blue light from electronic devices can have a negative impact on melatonin levels and sleep patterns. Stop using screen-based media a few hours before bedtime, and remove electronic devices from the bedroom.

5 Go green



Invest in some houseplants to help purify indoor air, improve mood and increase productivity.

3 Take in the natural light



Invest in a therapy lamp or specialized daylight bulbs to replicate natural daylight. If possible, get at least 30 minutes of outdoor daylight exposure, which can counteract the effect of blue light on sleep.

6 Share your experience



If you are experiencing any changes related to the transition into winter and less daylight, discuss them with a friend or family member, or consult with your physician.

Sources:

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