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WINTER BLUES IN HAMPSHIRE

It's the middle of winter and if you are feeling a bit low, don't worry – there are thousands like you right across Hampshire.

Getting depressed in winter is incredibly common and in recent years it has been recognised as a medical condition. It even has an official name, SAD or Seasonal Affective Disorder, although it is also often called the winter blues.

The cause is thought to be a reduction in serotonin – this is a chemical that is produced in your brain that keeps you happy. Due to the low levels of sunlight, the production of serotonin in your body slows down; this makes you want to eat more and can also cause a lack of energy, anxiety and sleep problems and depression. These are all typical symptoms in people with SAD.

The good news is that now we know what it is, there is a remedy. The UK SAD Association says that light therapy is the accepted treatment and is effective in 85% of diagnosed cases.

Femme Findley, manager of White Light Therapy in Basingstoke's Festival Place, says they have seen a real increase in interest in light therapy since Christmas.

“The fun of Christmas is over and now people know they are in for a few cold dark months,” she said. “They are beginning to realize they don't have to suffer with SAD as well.”

Femme says that to treat SAD properly, the light must be suitably bright.

“Light is measured in lux, and a light of at least 2,500 lux is needed, preferably higher,” she said. This is five times brighter than a well-lit office and a lot brighter than a normal living room. It is also important to have the light delivered from a reasonable distance, it is not required to sit right by the light.”

Femme says there are now some excellent light products on the market so that people can treat SAD in their own homes. White Light Therapy in Basingstoke are an authorised stockist of professional lights to treat SAD and they also have fully qualified staff who can advise on what light is best for individual situations. People can also contact the Seasonal Affective Disorder Association (www.sada.org.uk) for more information, or talk to their normal GP about the best treatment.

Now that so much more is known about the problem of winter blues, it is good that for most cases, there is such a simple and easy remedy.

White Light Therapy Skin Centre is open every day at Festival Place Shopping Centre in Basingstoke and have a good range of different light products available. There is a large adjoining car park. **Call 01256 637800, or simply pop in and have a look at some of the lights on show. www.white-therapy.com**