Seasonal Affective Disorder
Winter Depression

A seasonal affective disorder is a *depressive reaction.* It is when you feel emotionally down which seems to come at specific times of the year. Usually the most common time of year for this is winter. Otherwise, it behaves like a plain depression. As with other depressive disorders, there are:

- Crying episodes.
- Headaches.
- Irritability.
- Loss of energy.

DIAGNOSIS
The diagnosis of this problem is usually made by the history (what has been going on). A physical exam may be done to make sure there is no other cause of your depression.

TREATMENT
The treatment of seasonal affective disorders has been found to be helped immensely by photo-therapy. This means a person sits or lies for several hours per day in front of or under bright lights. The *symptoms* (problems) of depression respond rapidly, usually over a couple days.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS
- Follow your caregiver's instructions for light therapy.
- You must be awake during the light therapy.
- If you do not respond or you feel you are getting worse, see your caregiver.

Document Released: 09/12/2002 Document Re-Released: 09/26/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.