

Light Box Therapy

Light Box Therapy is a proven way to treat seasonal affective disorder (SAD)* by exposure to artificial light.

During light box therapy, you sit or work close to a light therapy box that gives off a bright light that mimics natural outdoor light.



SunRay II: Available for use at LSSU

In addition to SAD, light therapy is being studied as a treatment for other conditions, including: types of depression that don't occur seasonally; obsessive-compulsive disorder; jet lag; sleep disorders; and adjusting to a nighttime work schedule.

*SAD refers to a pattern of depression linked with seasonal changes (typically beginning in the fall or winter and ending in spring). SAD is more prevalent among people in communities located at higher latitudes.

LSSU Counseling Services

www.lssu.edu/counseling

Phone: 635-2752

LSSU Health CARE Center

www.lssu.edu/health

Phone: 635-2110

Light Box Therapy



LSSU Counseling Services
LSSU Health CARE Center

Light Box Therapy at Lake Superior State University

How does light box therapy work?

The therapeutic level of illumination has several known physiological effects, though its therapeutic mechanism is still unclear. Blood levels of the light-sensitive hormone melatonin, which may be abnormally high at certain times of day, are rapidly reduced by light exposure. Depending on when bright light is present, the body's internal clock—which controls daily rhythms of body temperature, hormone secretion, and sleep patterns—shifts ahead or is delayed when stimulated by light. These physiological time shifts may be the basis of the therapeutic response.

To be effective, light from the light box must enter your eyes indirectly. You cannot get the same effect merely by exposing your skin to the light. While your eyes must be open, you *do not* look directly at the light box, because the bright light can damage your eyes.

Do the lights really work?

Researchers at more than 15 medical centers and clinics in both the U.S. and abroad have had much success with light therapy in patients with clear histories of SAD.

What are the risks?

Light box therapy is generally safe. Side effects are generally mild and short-lasting when they do occur. They can include:

- Headache
- Nausea
- Eyestrain
- Irritability or agitation
- Mania, euphoria, hyperactivity, or agitation associated with bipolar disorder
- Dry mouth
- Sleep problems

When side effects do occur, they may go away on their own within a few days of starting light box therapy. You also may be able to manage side effects by reducing treatment time, moving farther from the light, or changing the time of day you use light therapy. It is important that you talk with the clinician who referred you for additional help or advice, or if side effects don't go away or get worse.

How can I try light box therapy?

Lake Superior State University has a light box on campus that students are able to schedule appointments to use. Before scheduling an appointment, students are required to undergo

a brief screening with LSSU's Health CARE Center or Counseling Services (all students who use the light box must receive a referral to do so). Use of the light box is *FREE* for LSSU students.

There are a number of reputable internet retailers of therapeutic light boxes, and you may consider investing in your own, personal light box. Although it's possible to do light box therapy on your own, it's best to have the guidance of a medical provider or mental health provider. This can help you get the most benefit out of light therapy and minimize possible side effects.

To find out more about light box therapy, please contact us:

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