

## Side Effects of Light Therapy

**Labbate LA, Lafer B, Thibault A, Sachs GS.**

**Side effects induced by bright light treatment for seasonal affective disorder.** J Clin Psychiatry. 1994 May;55(5):189-91.

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**BACKGROUND:** Bright light treatment has become an accepted treatment for seasonal affective disorder (SAD), but there have been few studies about adverse effects from using this treatment. We conducted a study to examine the frequency of adverse effects of bright light treatment for SAD. **METHOD:** Thirty patients meeting DSM-III-R criteria for major depression, recurrent, with seasonal pattern as determined by the Structured Clinical Interview for DSM-III-R were administered a structured interview, the 42-item Systematic Assessment for Treatment Emergent Events, to assess side effects from bright light treatment. **RESULTS:** Side effects were limited and mild. They remitted with time or decreased light. No patient discontinued treatment. One patient developed mild hypomania and 3 became agitated. Sleep disturbance occurred in 62% of patients (5 of 8) using evening light. Visual side effects occurred in 26% of patients (8 of 30). **CONCLUSION:** Except for one case of mild hypomania, no other clinically significant treatment-emergent adverse effects developed. Hypomania is an uncommon, but clinically important side effect. Mild visual complaints were common and remitted promptly. In this group of patients with SAD, bright light treatment was well tolerated and resulted in a limited number of adverse effects, none of which compromised treatment. The absence of a control group limits the specificity of these side effects to bright light treatment.

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Levitt AJ, Joffe RT, Moul DE, Lam RW, Teicher MH, Lebeque B, Murray MG, Oren DA, Schwartz P, Buchanan A, et al.

**Side effects of light therapy in seasonal affective disorder.** Am J Psychiatry. 1993 Apr;150(4):650-2.

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The authors report the frequency of side effects of light therapy in 105 patients with seasonal affective disorder treated with three intensities of light. Common symptoms to emerge during treatment were headache (19%), eyestrain (17%), and feeling "wired" (14%). There was no relationship between side effects and intensity of light used.