

GUIDE TO CHOOSING A LIGHT THERAPY DEVICE FOR SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

There are a wide variety of light boxes and other light devices for seasonal affective disorder treatment available today. However, not all of these products are safe or effective for seasonal affective disorder treatment. To avoid complications, use light boxes only under your physician's guidance.

Here are some considerations when buying a light therapy box for seasonal affective disorder treatment:

- **Intensity.** Look for a light box that allows you the right intensity of light at a comfortable seating distance. Some light boxes offer the preferred 10,000 lux only when you're within a few inches of the box, while others can reach a distance of nearly two feet.
- **Minimal UV Exposure.** Some light boxes use full-spectrum light bulbs that give off ultraviolet (UV) light, which can cause eye and skin damage. Look for devices that produce as little UV light as possible at high intensity or that carefully shield the UV rays they produce.
- **Blue Light.** Some of the latest light therapy devices emit narrow spectrum blue light. Research has not determined, however, if blue light therapy offers definite advantages over conventional light therapy. Also, the retina is more sensitive to the shorter blue wavelengths, so there's a greater potential risk of causing retinal injury with prolonged exposures to blue light when compared with similar exposures to white light. Although the true risk cannot be determined and retinal injury from blue wavelength devices has not been reported, gazing directly at the light source should be avoided.
- **Light Direction.** Light should come from above your line of sight, not directly at it or below it. Make sure the light box you want can be positioned appropriately.
- **Cost.** Prices vary greatly, from about \$200 to \$500. Health insurance plans don't always cover the cost of light therapy boxes. Check with your insurance company to see if your benefits will cover the cost.
- **Style.** Some light boxes look like upright lamps, while others are small and rectangular. You can even purchase a light therapy device attached to a visor, which would allow you to receive light therapy while remaining active.
- **Convenience.** Some light boxes are bigger than others, which can make them less portable. Find one that you can move easily and that fits the desired location in your home or office.