



Winter Blues Got Your Employees Down? Complementary Care May Help.



In the dark, cold weeks between the end of the holiday season and the beginning of spring, a lot of us are feeling less than cheerful — which can lead to a less-than-optimal environment in the workplace.

Only about 4-6% of people have severe Seasonal Affective Disorder, or SAD, a form of clinical depression associated with the change in seasons.¹ But a large percentage of people suffer from milder dips in mood and energy, often referred to as the “winter blues.”

The phenomenon is thought to be caused by the disruption of our circadian rhythms as days grow shorter, combined with the fact that, in winter, people tend to exercise less and get sick more often.

If you’re looking for ways to help employees battle the winter blues, start by looking at your health plan: The complementary care benefits and wellness discounts that Tufts Health Plan offers could help brighten some dreary winter days.



Yoga

Yoga offers a wide range of benefits, including relaxation and stress reduction. It's also a great form of indoor exercise that helps build strength and flexibility. Many health clubs and fitness centers offer yoga classes, but online classes are a great alternative—especially when the weather outside is frightful. Tufts Health Plan is now providing commercial plan members² with access to virtual yoga and meditation classes at a discounted rate.



Mindfulness and Meditation

A growing number of health plans, including Tufts Health Plan, are making it easier and more affordable for members to learn meditation and other mindfulness techniques. Mindfulness has been proven to help relieve stress and anxiety, improve mood, help restore energy and enthusiasm, and boost overall feelings of wellbeing. In other words, it's the perfect antidote to the winter blues. But it's also a practice that employees can use to minimize stress and improve their overall wellness year-round.



Acupuncture and Massage

Acupuncture and massage therapy are two other forms of complementary care shown to be effective in helping relieve stress and improve emotional and mental well-being. Even just the act of slowing down and taking an hour or so to do something relaxing can be therapeutic. Bringing a massage therapist into the workplace for chair massages is a much-appreciated treat for employees. Tufts Health Plan members² can also get a 25% discount on massage therapy and acupuncture from participating providers. Members have unlimited acupuncture coverage, with no prior authorizations or referrals required.



Building Healthy Habits and Kicking Unhealthy Ones

There's a strong connection between physical wellness and mood. Working on healthy goals like losing weight, eating better, exercising more and quitting smoking can help employees feel better both physically and mentally, while providing a sense of purpose—always a good way to kick the winter blues. Tufts Health Plan offers members² a range of nutrition and weight loss discounts and perks, tools and resources for quitting smoking, plus discounts on fitness center initiation, membership fees and more.



Behavioral Health Counseling and Care

Sometimes, a low mood is more debilitating than just the “winter blues.” Clinical depression and other mental health issues may require help from a counselor or psychiatrist. Employees can get professional help through their plan's behavioral health network. Telehealth is an excellent alternative for employees who may be reluctant to seek help for reasons of privacy or inconvenience, or who just aren't up for battling the winter elements. Tufts Health Plan commercial plan members² can use our telehealth partner, Teladoc, to access a wide network of behavioral health providers.

At Tufts Health Plan, we're committed to helping our members stay healthy and happy all year round. Contact us to learn more about how we can help your employees feel better no matter what the weather is like outside.

tuftshealthplan.com

¹ "Seasonal Affective Disorder" - familydoctor.org

² Excluding Tufts Health Direct members