



# HOW TO BEAT THE SUMMERTIME BLUES

Though many of us struggle to feel our best during the winter months, summer is often painted as the exact opposite: a joyful, relaxed stretch of sunshine and beautiful weather, with not even a hint of stress on the horizon.

However, the reality of summer can feel a lot less bright and sunny for many, with several seasonal challenges making these months just as difficult as the winter for those affected.

## But how do they differ?

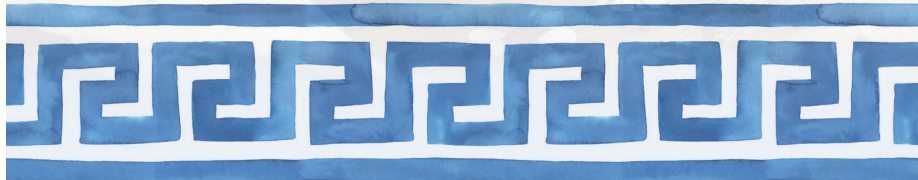
- **Disrupted Routines:** The end of the school year and changes in work schedules brought about by summer can remove important and necessary daily structure, as well as increase stress for those who need to find and/or finance alternative childcare.
- **Seasonal Depression:** Rather than the lethargy and insomnia that characterize winter-associated seasonal affective disorder (SAD), summer-associated SAD is characterized by insomnia, heightened anxiety, irritability and weight loss. Heat and humidity can drain energy, limit executive function and affect mood, while longer days and associated routine shifts can quickly disrupt sleeping habits.
- **Summer “FOMO”:** Summer presents a unique wave of social and financial pressure to plan vacations and fun outings, as well as feelings of inadequacy and “fear of missing out” (FOMO) if you are unable to participate.
- **Body Image:** With “swimsuit season” at its peak, summer can lead many into a cycle of unrealistic expectations that are focused solely on one societal ideal of what a healthy body looks like, and not on encouraging each individual to pursue their own unique fitness goals.

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Consider these simple tips to help keep mental health in mind all summer long:

- 1. Maintain routine and structure.**  
Aim for consistency at bedtime, mealtimes and the time you allot for exercise, etc., to create stability and balance in your schedule.
- 2. Practice healthy hydration.**  
Dehydration can mimic the physiological symptoms of anxiety. Anticipate thirst by drinking six to eight glasses of water each day, and by constantly replenishing your fluid intake before you even feel dehydrated.
- 3. Set boundaries.** Your summer schedule can become busy quickly, so be sure to remind yourself that it's okay to say "no." Prioritize self-care activities over any that feel purely like obligations and avoid burnout by scheduling downtime to reenergize.
- 4. Be mindful about time outside.**  
The serotonin boost you get from sunlight can be a valuable tool, but don't forget the irritability and anxiety associated with extended heat exposure. Try going out in the mornings or evenings when it's cooler and be sure to seek shade and/or dress wisely when you do venture out in peak heat.
- 5. Avoid comparison.** Whether it's feeling bad about the incredible tropical vacation your coworker just took, or spending time over-analyzing the photo of you with your family at the beach, always remember the famous adage: Comparison is the thief of joy. We do ourselves no favors by attempting to equate our own unique circumstances and journeys to anyone else's. Try taking a social media break, or spending time reframing your goals to focus on your own growth and achievements.

Keeping these tactics in mind, we wish you and your loved ones a joyous summer season!



# MEDITERRANEAN Chickpea Salad

Prep Time: 15 minutes | Cook Time: 0 minutes | Total: 15 minutes

Serves: 4

2 (15-ounce) cans chickpeas, drained and rinsed

1 English cucumber, diced

1 pint cherry tomatoes, halved

½ small red onion, thinly sliced

½ cup crumbled feta cheese

¼ cup chopped fresh parsley

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

1 teaspoon dried oregano

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon black pepper

1. In a large bowl, combine the chickpeas, cucumber, tomatoes, red onion, feta and parsley.
2. In a small bowl or jar, whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice, oregano, salt and black pepper.
3. Pour the dressing over the salad and toss gently until everything is evenly coated.
4. Taste and adjust seasoning if needed. Serve immediately or refrigerate for 30 minutes before serving to let the flavors meld.

**Notes:** This salad keeps well in the refrigerator for up to 3 days. Add avocado just before serving if desired. For extra protein, top with grilled chicken, shrimp or quinoa.

## Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 285 | Carbohydrates: 30g | Protein: 10g | Fat: 14g | Saturated Fat: 4g | Sodium: 540mg | Fiber: 8g | Sugar: 5g | Calcium: 120mg | Iron: 3mg | Vitamin C: 18mg