Light Box Use Guidelines for Students

A 10,000 Lux (the illumination power of one candle) light therapy box can produce an antidepressant effect in as little as 30 minutes.

Treatment anytime of day can be effective, however for some people, morning is better. Late afternoon or evening use may cause insomnia.

Effectiveness usually takes 2-4 days or several weeks for some people. Do not give up on treatment unless lights are used consistently for 2 weeks.

Response to Light Box therapy is individualized. If treatment is stopped, relapse may occur in 1-2 weeks, but usually by the 3rd or 4th day. However, improvement can also persist for weeks after stopping a course of treatment.

Treatment can often be terminated in late Spring, depending on exposure to and amount of light present outdoors.

**Treatment Benefits**
Increased energy, calmness, lighter body sensations, normalization of sleep, decreased carbohydrate craving, and increased mental alertness. Signs and symptoms of Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) should disappear. About 50% of people benefit from Light Box therapy.

**Light Box Therapy Side Effects**
Side effects are typically mild and treatment is usually well tolerated. Possible side effects include but are not limited to: headaches, eye strain, irritability, overactivity, insomnia, fatigue, dryness of eyes, dryness of nasal passages and sinuses, and sunburn-type skin reactions.

**Light Box Set Up**
Face Light Box lamp at eye level (distance from lights can be 12-18 inches, depending on unit).

It is not necessary to stare at the lights or even glance up at regular intervals. You can read or watch TV, however, if reading, be careful not to read with your head down.

**Possible Timing Schedules**
15 to 20 minutes daily may be sufficient. Some prefer a repeat session or multiple exposures for additional 15 to 20 minute intervals.

**Treatment Consistency**
Daily or almost daily treatment is advised. Occasionally skipping a day is acceptable, yet longer periods of skipping exposure will likely result in lost benefits. In Spring, monitor cloudy weather which may result in a need for additional exposure.

**Suggestions for Inadequate Response to Treatment**
- Adjust Light Box to appropriate eye level height.
- Adjust distance from the Light Box.
- Adjust length of exposure.
- Adjust time of day exposure.