**Is It Just Winter Blues?**

Mental Health America *of* Porter County is getting ready to embrace the upcoming winter months. This time of year is marked by colder weather and shorter days with less sunlight. During this time, many people experience a reduction in mood, or “Cabin Fever.” Yet many people can often experience Seasonal Affective Disorder which is a form of depression that often affects people during the winter months. This disorder commonly affects many adults, but children can experience it as well, and often do. If you are a parent and notice that your children seem to be displaying some of the following symptoms during winter time, it may be worth consulting your doctor.

* **Changes in mood:** Irritability, sadness, increase in sensitivity to criticism are all examples of changes in one’s mood.
* **Low energy:** Children may have energy that is lower than usual, appear sluggish, or report feeling tired more often.
* **Lack of Interest:** They may not partake in some of interests and activities that they used to enjoy. They may feel as if they are unable to, or have no desire to partake in these activities.
* **Lack of socialization:** A child may spend less time socializing with his or her peers, or may have no desire to interact and spend time with friends.
* **Changes in Diet:** A child may have a stronger craving for unhealthy or junk foods such as sugary treats and foods high in carbohydrates. Additionally, the child may overeat.
* **Difficulty Concentrating:** A child may have a more difficult time focusing on school work and paying attention in class, as well as staying motivated to complete different assignments.

If you notice that your child is experiencing some or all of these symptoms, especially during the winter months, you may want to consider consulting with your family doctor. There are many treatment options available for those who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder; simply suffering is not the only option. You can find more information from http://kidshealth.org/ which will provide you with a more in-depth look at this disorder as well.