Most people notice less energy during the short winter days, and some even have a hard time functioning. This type of seasonal depression occurs when the days grow shorter and there is less sunlight. Winter depression has been known throughout history, and is very common in places like Canada and Scandinavia. Light therapy can improve the mood of people who experience depression during these dark days of winter. One of the methods of achieving morning bright light is with a box like the one pictured above which produces no ultraviolet light. A therapeutic bright light session usually takes a half hour to an hour although the “dose” of light can be changed daily if necessary. Researchers have also shown that bright light treatment is also effective for depressions that occur at times other than winter. The use of light therapy is a particularly attractive treatment possibility for two situations: (1) women who are pregnant -- where a depression treatment that does not involve medication is preferable; and (2) individuals with bipolar disorder -- light therapy has a relatively low risk of side effects and few interactions with medications that patients may be taking. Further information and self-tests can be found on the website for the Center for Environmental Therapeutics, www.cet.org.

Information specifically for women and studies of bright light treatment for depression during pregnancy and for depression in bipolar disorder are available through Women’s Behavioral HealthCARE at www.womensbehavioralhealth.org at 1-800-436-2461.