

What else should I know about taking medicines for depression?

Antidepressant medicines can increase the risk of suicide, especially when you first start taking the medicine or when you increase the dose or amount you take. Contact your doctor immediately if your depression gets worse or you are thinking about hurting yourself.

Antidepressant medicines can cause a rare side effect called serotonin syndrome. The symptoms of serotonin syndrome are:

- Feeling confused
- Having hallucinations. A person who has hallucinations sees, hears, feels, smells or tastes something that is not actually there
- Feeling restless or anxious
- Fast heart beat
- Changes in blood pressure
- Fever
- Feeling sick and vomiting
- Muscle stiffness or tremor
- Seizures or convulsions

Contact your doctor immediately if you experience any of these symptoms.

Pharmacists and experts in medicine can also help with information on side effects caused by antidepressant medications; however any medication changes should only be made by your doctor.

Keep a record of your symptoms and any side effects from your medicine. Take these notes when you visit your doctor and ask questions if you need more information about how antidepressants are working for you.

Friends and family are important for support and care but may not have the accurate answers for your questions. Every patient is different. Therefore, not all information available on the internet is accurate and specific to your illness.

Avoid or limit your use of alcohol (wine, beer and spirits including cocktails), tobacco or other drugs. Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs can affect the way that your medicine works.

The *Medimate* brochure, which is available in a number of languages, can help you understand and use antidepressants, or other medicines, in partnership with your doctor and pharmacist. This brochure and other useful information are available at the National Prescribing Service MedicineWise (NPS) website: www.nps.org.au/translated-health-information-about-medicines.

Someone I know also has depression. Should I give them my medicine?

Never share your medicine with anyone else. Your medicine has been prescribed for your symptoms and to suit your medical history. Your medicine may be harmful to someone else.

If someone you know seems to have similar symptoms to you, encourage them to visit the doctor.

What if I need help to speak in English?

Ask for an interpreter if you have difficulty communicating with your doctor or pharmacist. A professional interpreter should be used rather than a family member or friend. They are trained in understanding medical terms and are required to keep information confidential.

Your doctor or pharmacist can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450. This service is free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

This brochure contains general information and does not include all possible side effects or all brand names of medications.

What is depression?

Depression is a medical illness that can have serious effects on physical and mental health.

The symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling sad most of the day, nearly every day
- Loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy
- Lack of energy
- Changes in sleep habits
- Changes in appetite
- Changes in sex drive
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, worthlessness or guilt
- Not being able to concentrate or make decisions
- Increased irritability or anger
- Increased anxiety
- Thoughts of death or suicide

If you experience from any of these symptoms for most of the day for at least two weeks, then you may have depression.

How common is depression?

Depression is a common illness in Australia. It is more common in women and can affect people of all ages, including children and young people.

What causes depression?

The exact cause of depression is not known. A number of factors are linked to depression, including:

- Family history of depression
- Distressing situations like unemployment, relationship problems, isolation or bereavement
- Other illnesses

Sometimes depression can occur without an obvious reason.

What treatments are available for depression?

Depression can be treated. Some treatments are listed below:

- Antidepressant medicines can help people with depression. They are effective in preventing recurrence and relapse when taken long-term. Medicines can only be prescribed by doctors, including your general practitioner or psychiatrist.
- Talking treatments such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). This involves talking with a mental health professional such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker or counsellor. Psychotherapy can help people solve problems and cope with challenges.
- Electro-convulsive therapy (ECT) is a safe and effective treatment for severe depression that has not responded to medicine or other treatments. Your doctor can tell you more about ECT if this treatment is recommended for you.

Many people use a combination of treatments to help manage depression.

How do antidepressant medicines work?

Antidepressant medicines help to restore and maintain healthy levels of brain chemicals. They are usually effective in controlling the symptoms of depression and help to stop the symptoms of depression from returning.

What does my doctor need to know to give me antidepressant medicines?

Tell your doctor as much information as possible about your symptoms and medical history, including any illnesses that you have or have had in the past.

Tell your doctor about any medicines and traditional or herbal remedies that you use. These can affect the way that your medicine works.

You need to talk to your doctor if you are planning on having a baby or if you are already pregnant or breastfeeding your baby when taking medicines for depression.

How long will I need to take antidepressant medicines?

Medicines for depression will not stop your symptoms immediately. You usually need to take antidepressant medicine regularly for several weeks to get the full effect of the medicine. You will also need to continue to take antidepressant medicines for some time after full recovery from depression. Any changes to medication doses should be discussed with your doctor.

What are the different types of antidepressant medicines?

There are different types of antidepressant medicines. You may need to try different types of antidepressant medicine under the supervision of your doctor to find the best medicine for you.

What are the general side effects of antidepressant medicines?

Different types of antidepressant medicines have different side effects for different people. A side effect is an unwanted reaction to a medicine.

Antidepressant medicines are not known to cause any long term side effects and are not addictive.

Types of antidepressant medicines and their side effects

Tricyclic antidepressant (TCAs) medicines

Tricyclic antidepressant medicines can be very effective.

Generic name	Brand names
Amitriptyline	Endep
Clomipramine	Anafranil
Dothiepin	Prothiaden or Dothep
Doxepin	Deptran
Imipramine	Tofranil
Nortriptyline	Allegron

It is important to take tricyclic antidepressant medicines as directed by your doctor. Do not change the amount that you take. Tricyclic antidepressant medicines can be dangerous if you take more than your prescribed dose.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

The symptoms of depression include:

This type of antidepressant medicine targets a specific brain chemical called serotonin.

Generic name	Brand names
Citalopram	Cipramil
Escitalopram	Lexapro
Fluoxetine	Lovan, Prozac
Fluvoxamine	Luvox
Paroxetine	Aropax
Sertraline	Zoloft

The common side effects of tricyclic antidepressant medicines include:

- Feeling sleepy
- Dry feeling in mouth
- Blurred vision
- Problems with urinating
- Dizziness (feeling that everything is spinning around you)
- Increase in weight
- Problems with having sex
- Constipation (difficulty with emptying the bowels)
- Fast or irregular heart rate

The common side effects of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor medicines include:

- Feeling sick and vomiting
- Indigestion (discomfort in the upper abdomen, belching or uncomfortable feelings of being full when eating)
- Abdominal pain
- Diarrhoea
- Constipation (difficulty emptying bowels)
- Rash
- Excessive sweating
- Feeling anxious
- Headache
- Difficulties sleeping or feeling too sleepy
- Trembling
- Problems with having sex

Serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)

Serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors targets two brain chemicals: serotonin and noradrenaline.

Generic name	Brand names
Venlafaxine	Effexor XR
Desvenlafaxine	Pristiq
Duloxetine	Cymbalta
Reboxetine (NARI)	Edronax

Noradrenalin and specific serotonergic antidepressants (NaSSAs)

This type of antidepressant medicine may be prescribed if you also have problems with anxiety or sleeping. This type of medicine also targets two specific brain chemicals: serotonin and noradrenaline.

Generic name	Brand names
Mirtazepine	Avanza

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)

Monoamine oxidase inhibitor antidepressant medicines are used less commonly than the other type of antidepressant medicines.

These medicines can be affected by the food you eat. You must be very careful with the food you eat when you are given this type of medicine. Your doctor can provide you a list of foods that you should avoid while taking this medicine.

You also must be careful with taking any other type of medicine, including herbal or traditional medicines. Talk to your doctor about this.

Generic name	Brand names
Phenelzine	Nardil
Tranylcypromine	Parnate
Moclobemide (reversible inhibitor of MAO)	Aurorix, Mohexal

The common side effects of selective serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitor medicines include:

- Feeling sick and vomiting
- Dizziness (feeling everything is spinning around you)
- Difficulties sleeping
- Unusual dreams
- Excessive sweating
- Constipation (difficulty with emptying the bowels)
- Trembling
- Feeling anxious
- Headache
- Problems with having sex

The common side effects of selective noradrenaline and specific serotonergic medicines include:

- Feeling sleepy
- Increase in appetite and weight gain

The common side effects of monoamine oxidase inhibitor antidepressant medicines include:

- Dizziness (feeling everything is spinning around you)
- Changes in blood pressure
- Feeling sleepy
- Difficulties sleeping
- Headaches
- Build up of fluid in the body (for example, swollen feet and ankles)
- Blurred vision
- Increase in weight

Can I stop taking my medicine if I start to feel well?

You should always take your medicine as directed by your doctor. Do not change the amount of medicine that you take. You must talk to your doctor before you stop taking your medicine. Suddenly stopping antidepressant medicines can cause severe illness.