



Visit your doctor to talk about your health and the medicines you may need. This factsheet will give you information about a type of medicine. You will learn what questions you should ask your doctor about this medicine. Don't be afraid to ask questions. It is very important for your health.

Let's Learn about Medicines to Treat Depression

There may be times in your life when you will feel very sad like when losing a job, losing someone you love, or even getting sick. After a while, with the help of your family or a counselor, you should be able to recover and go back to handling your life as you used to. However, if you see that you are having a very hard time feeling better **AND**,

- you feel “sad” every day for **more than 2 weeks**, or you feel like you cannot handle your life as you used to, **AND**
- you have **five or more of the symptoms** described below, it is possible that you are suffering from depression and need to take medicine.

If you think you are depressed, talk to your doctor. In this factsheet you are going to learn about antidepressant medicines and what you should talk to your doctor about.



The symptoms of depression

Some symptoms of depression may be:

- You feel unhappy or negative about the future
- You feel guilty or worthless, like you don't matter
- You aren't interested in things you usually like to do, like playing with your kids or doing hobbies
- You don't have much energy
- You have a hard time going to sleep, staying asleep, or waking up in the mornings
- You have a hard time focusing or remembering things, or making decisions
- You eat a lot more or a lot less than usual
- You are grumpy a lot or feel restless
- You feel anxious and can't handle stress
- You have thoughts of suicide or have tried to kill yourself
- You have pain, like headaches or stomachaches, that don't go away with treatment



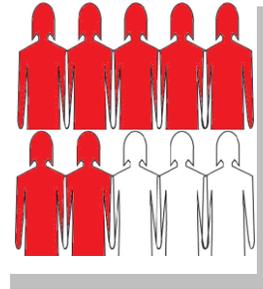
If you are having suicidal thoughts call the National Suicide Prevention Hotline at 1-800-273-8255

If you have five or more of these symptoms, without having a reason to feel sad, or you have suffered from depression in the past, then you may need an antidepressant.



How well do antidepressant medicines work?

If there are ten people taking antidepressant medicines, it's possible that five to seven of them will get better. If you take an antidepressant medicine and you do not get better, your doctor may give you a higher dose or give you a different medicine.



It is also important for you to know that:

- You may need to try two or three different antidepressants before you find the right one for you.
- Most people who take antidepressants experience at least one side effect, though they are usually not very serious.
- Antidepressant medicines all work the same, but they do cause different side effects. You and your doctor should talk about which side effects you prefer to avoid.
- You should also talk to your doctor about the possibility of starting out with a low dose of an antidepressant medicine so you can feel less of the side effects.

If you are taking an antidepressant...

- **NEVER** take **MORE** medicine without telling your doctor
- **NEVER STOP** taking it without your doctor's permission
- When you start taking an antidepressant **ALWAYS ASK** your doctor if they will work well with other medicines and supplements you are already taking



What are the side effects of antidepressants?

Some antidepressant medicines can cause **mild side effects**. This means they are not too bad and may go away after a short time. The side effects include:

- Diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Headaches



- Nausea
- Shaking (tremors)
- Sweating



Other antidepressant medicines can cause more **serious side effects**. If these side effects do not go away, you may need to change the antidepressant. They include:

- You feel sleepy or confused
- You feel as if you are in a panic, nervous, or agitated
- You have thoughts of suicide
- You cannot sleep
- You have problems with having sex
- You gain weight



Which antidepressants should you choose?

Consumer Reports Best Buy Drugs evaluated twelve different kinds of antidepressants by comparing how well they work, how safe they are, and how much they cost. *Consumer Reports* recommends starting with these five generic medicines to treat depression:

1. **Bupropion**
2. **Citalopram**
3. **Escitalopram**
4. **Fluoxetine**
5. **Sertraline**



In the United States, “generic” medicines are just as good as brand-name medicines. They are very safe and work just like the brand-name medicine, and they cost a lot less money. Ask your doctor if you can get a generic medicine instead of a brand-name medicine.

Stores like Kroger, Sam’s Club, Target, and Wal-Mart have discount generic medicine programs. If you buy your medicine using these programs, a month’s supply may cost you as little as \$4. Your supply for 3 months may cost you only \$10.

To learn more about this topic go to:

<http://www.consumerreports.org/health/best-buy-drugs/antidepressants.htm>



How to Get the Best Price for Your Medicines

- **Ask for a generic:** Tell your pharmacist you want a generic medicine instead of the brand-name. You will pay less for a generic. Not all brand-name medicines have a generic, but many do.
- **Compare prices:** Call or visit three different pharmacies. Give them the name of the medicine and ask how much it costs. Ask if they have a drug discount program that can help you pay less for your medicine. Buy your medicine from the pharmacy that gives you the cheapest price.
- **Sign up for patient assistance programs:** Most companies that make medicines have programs that help people that don’t have a lot of money and do not have insurance to get brand-name medicines for free or at a low cost. The *Partnership for Prescription Assistance* can help you find a program: www.pparx.org or 1-888-477-2669.

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