

Frequently Asked Questions About Antidepressant Medication



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How do antidepressants work?

Antidepressants help restore the correct balance of important chemicals (called neurotransmitters) in the brain that affect a person's mood.

Are antidepressants addictive?

No, absolutely not. Antidepressants are not addictive or habit-forming, and they do not provide a "high."

Will I get better if I take the antidepressant?

Between 50 percent and 80 percent of people with depression recover completely with an adequate trial of medication. If you do not feel better after taking an adequate trial of one antidepressant, there is an excellent chance that you will respond more favorably to a different antidepressant.

How long will the antidepressant medication take to work?

People with depression usually start to feel better after taking an antidepressant medication for two to six weeks. In many cases, sleep and appetite improve first. It may take a little longer for your mood and energy to improve. If your depression does not improve after about six weeks, your clinician may want to increase the dose of the medication you are taking or switch you to another antidepressant.

How long will I have to take the antidepressant?

Once you have completely recovered from your depressive episode, you should stay on the medication for another four to nine months to prevent your depression from returning. Some people who have had previous episodes of depression should stay on antidepressant medication for longer periods of time to prevent new episodes of depression.

What should I do if I forget to take a dose of the medication?

Do **not** take a double dose to correct for the dose you forgot without asking your clinician. Take your next dose at the regular time.

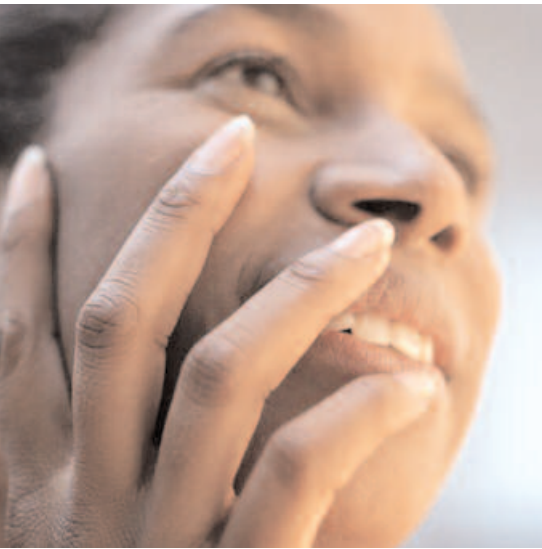
Should I drink alcohol when I'm taking an antidepressant medication?

Alcoholic beverages can produce side effects in some persons taking antidepressants. Therefore, if you intend to have any alcohol-containing drinks while taking antidepressants, it is important you discuss this with your clinician.

Is it safe to take antidepressants with other medications?

In general, antidepressants can be taken safely with other medications. However, it is very important for you to tell your clinician exactly which other medications you are taking (including over-the-counter medications) so he or she can determine whether there are any potentially dangerous interactions.

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sleep, even in people who do not have depression. They are advantageous over other sleeping pills in that they are not habit-forming, and they usually do not impair concentration or coordination.

I have a problem with pain. How can an antidepressant help with this?

Some antidepressants have been shown to be successful (even in the absence of major depression) in a number of pain conditions, such as nerve damage from diabetes and shingles or phantom limb pain. Antidepressants may also help restore normal sleep and “reverse” a vicious cycle of pain and poor sleep.

I have low energy and feel tired a lot of the time. How can an antidepressant help with this?

Low energy and fatigue commonly occur in people with depression. Once the depression improves, their energy starts to return as well. Antidepressants can help restore energy in patients who are depressed. With successful treatment, patients will feel less tired and more able to do their usual activities.

I have a lot of stress in my life. How can an antidepressant help with this?

Life stress can cause or worsen the symptoms of depression. The depression can then worsen the impact of stress (such as work stress, family problems, physical

disabilities or financial worries) and your ability to cope with them. Treating depression can help some patients break out of this vicious circle.

My problem is anxiety or panic attacks, not depression. How can antidepressants help?

In many cases, anxiety is a by-product of depression. Once the depression lifts, the anxiety improves as well. Some antidepressant medications are also among the most effective medical treatments for anxiety disorders, including panic disorder and generalized anxiety disorder.

Are there any dangerous side effects?

Side effects from antidepressants are usually mild. You should ask your clinician what to expect and what to do if you have a problem. In many cases, your body will get used to the medication, and you won't be bothered with the side effect for long. In other cases, your clinician may suggest that you lower the dose, add another medication or change to another antidepressant. If used properly, there are no dangerous or life-threatening side effects.

Can I stop taking the medication once I start feeling better?

No. You should not stop taking the medication without first talking with your clinician. If you stop taking the medication too soon, you would be at high risk for having your depression return. In addition, some medications must be stopped gradually to give your body time to adjust. In most cases, you should expect to continue taking the medication for four to nine months after all of your depressive symptoms have gone away.

My problem is inability to sleep. How can an antidepressant help with this?

In many cases, poor sleep is a primary symptom of depression. Once the depression lifts, sleep improves as well. Some antidepressants can help restore normal

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