

Antidepressants

Q. Why should I read this?

A. You may want to read this if you or a member of your family is suffering from, for example, depression or an anxiety disorder or is taking an antidepressant.

Q. Why am I being given this medication?

A. Doctors can prescribe Antidepressants for depression (moderate to severe). They may also be prescribed for anxiety.

Q. What about Counselling or Therapy?

A. Discuss this with your doctor as either counselling or therapy may be enough for you. However, in certain cases, an antidepressant may well be the best course of treatment.

Q. Do antidepressants work?

A. Studies show that antidepressants can be effective in about two thirds of those that take them. They must be taken daily or as instructed in the Patient Information Leaflet because if you don't they will not work.

Q. Can antidepressants make me feel suicidal?

A. This is difficult to answer. Sometimes, younger people in their late teens and early twenties have felt like self-harming and this may have been due to the antidepressants that they have taken. However, depression and not receiving treatment can make one feel like self-harming. If you feel like harming yourself then the best thing to do is to go and see your doctor immediately, or if needed, attend your local Accident & Emergency Department.

Q. How long do they take to work?

A. They can take up to 4-6 weeks to work for an acute episode of depression.

Q. When can I stop?

A. After the depression clears they may need to be taken for at least 4-6 months and only stopped after discussion with your doctor or else the depression may well come back.

Q. Why should I continue to take antidepressants for so long if I feel well?

A. It is really important to continue taking the antidepressant for the amount time suggested by your doctor so as to get the full benefit of the antidepressant you are taking and also to try and prevent the depression from coming back.

Q. Sometimes I hear or read or see that antidepressants can be 'bad' for you and I feel like stopping the antidepressant. What should I do?

A. If you have any concerns about the antidepressant that you are taking then go and speak to the doctor that gave you the medication or your pharmacist. They may be able to put your mind at rest by putting the risk of taking the antidepressant and not taking into context.

Q. What side effects do they have?

A. Different antidepressants have different side effects. For side effects about the medication you are taking please see the Patient Information Leaflet that came with your antidepressant medication or if you are in patient in hospital then ask a member of staff for a copy of the Patient Information Leaflet. In general, Antidepressants are not addictive (physically) like smoking, for example. However, they can be psychologically addictive for example like tea or coffee. Some antidepressants need to be reduced slowly before stopping. (For side effects about the medication you are taking please see the Patient Information Leaflet that came with your antidepressant medication or if you are in patient in hospital then ask a member of staff for a copy of the Patient Information Leaflet).

Q. Will I experience any side effects stopping treatment with my antidepressant?

A. Stopping certain antidepressants is associated with withdrawal symptoms. The best thing to do is to ask your doctor or pharmacist, or read your Patient Information Leaflet so to know how best to stop your antidepressant.

Q. What if I am pregnant or trying for a baby?

A. Please consult your doctor if you are or think you are pregnant or are nursing and on an antidepressant.

Q. Can I get an antidepressant if I am under 18 years of age?

A. In general, antidepressants should only be prescribed to those under the age of 18 years by a qualified medical specialist.

Please keep out of the reach of children

Q. Can I drink alcohol when I am taking Antidepressants?

A. In general, alcohol is a 'depressant' so if you are feeling depressed taking alcohol may make you feel worse. With some antidepressants alcohol is best avoided. Please consult the Patient Information Leaflet and if needs be discuss this with your doctor or pharmacist.

Q. What causes Depression?

A. Depression is thought to be caused by a variety of social, psychological and biological factors such as a chemical imbalance (of serotonin or noradrenaline) in the brain.

Q. How do Antidepressants work?

A. A popular theory is that antidepressants may work by restoring the balance of various chemicals within the brain.

Q. What types of antidepressants exist?

A. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), Noradrenergic Reuptake Inhibitors (NARIs), Noradrenergic and Specific Serotonergic Antidepressants (NaSSA) and Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs) are three of the mostly commonly prescribed antidepressants.

Q. Where can I get more information about Antidepressants & Depression?

A. Your doctor, pharmacist or the following websites:

www.imb.ie

www.medicines.ie

www.yourmentalhealth.ie

www.shineonline.ie

www.aware.ie

www.grow.ie

In addition, the Patient Information Leaflet that comes with your medication contains important and useful information about the medications you may be taking.