

Taking Antidepressant Medication

This tip sheet explains what to expect from taking antidepressant medications, and when you should contact your physician. It also provides other general information about your treatment with antidepressant medication. Remember that in addition to treating depression, antidepressant medication is sometimes used for other conditions such as anxiety and pain.

My Medication: _____ Dosage and time to be taken: _____

Physician's Name: _____ Office Tel #: _____

Date & Time for Follow-up Visits:

#1 _____ #2 _____ #3 _____

Before You Leave the Doctor's Office:

For your safety, tell your doctor if:

- You are taking any other prescription or over-the-counter medicines (including vitamins or herbal remedies).
- You have other health problems.
- You are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- You have any food or medication allergies.

Ask Your Doctor or Nurse:

- To consider prescribing a medication covered under your pharmacy benefit to reduce your out-of-pocket cost.
- About the antidepressant medication(s) prescribed
 1. Name of the medication
 2. The dosage
 3. The time it is to be taken.

Write this information on your Personal Medication Log. Then, when you pick up your prescription, compare this with the information on the prescription to make sure they match.

- When you should have a follow-up visit after you start your medication. (Depression guidelines recommend follow-up within four weeks after beginning medication).
- How you should expect the medication to affect you and when you can expect improvement. (Generally, depression-related symptoms do not improve for two to four weeks. This is because the medication works only after it has reached a sufficient level in your body. This level must be maintained to be effective. Do not stop the medication without asking your doctor first).
- How long you should continue taking this medication. (In many cases, treatment is recommended for at least six to nine months to reduce the chance of relapse).
- How you should contact your doctor if there is an emergency, or if you have a question.
- If you miss a dose of the medication, ask your doctor if you should

- ☐ Take your next dose as scheduled
- ☐ Take the missed pill immediately

- ☐ Call your doctor
- ☐ Other

Starting Your Medication

- Read the Label. If you have questions, contact your doctor or pharmacist.
- Take your medication exactly as your doctor has directed.

- Do not stop using your medication unless your doctor tells you to. With certain medications, it is important to gradually decrease the dose under your doctor's supervision to maintain your health.
- Fill out your Personal Medication Log if you experience any effects and before your follow-up visit
- Take a copy of the Personal Medication Log with you every time you see a doctor so he/she is aware of all the medications that you use and their effects. This information allows your doctor to know what may be helping you, what does not seem to help, and any potential side effect interactions between your medications.

For Your Safety

- Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before you take any other medications, including over the counter medications
- If you receive treatment from more than one doctor or other health care provider, make sure to tell all of them about all of the medications you are taking. This helps your providers coordinate the care you receive and can reduce the risk of potentially dangerous medication interactions.
- Never drink alcohol while taking antidepressant medication as it can be dangerous.
- Keep all of your appointments with your doctor. He or she needs to check on your progress.
- Be sure to refill your prescription before you run out. Remember the medication works best with consistent use.
- Do not share your medication with anyone.

Common Side Effects

Some people experience side effects while taking antidepressant medication. Changes in the level of chemicals in the brain can affect other areas of the body. These effects can be bothersome, but are usually not serious. Side effects are usually most noticeable during the first few weeks you take your medication, then generally decrease or go away. Possible side effects include

- Dry mouth
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Drowsiness w Nervousness
- Trouble sleeping
- Dizziness
- Sexual problems (even if you are embarrassed, please talk to your doctor if you experience a noticeable decrease in sexual desire or other sexual problems)
- Call your doctor right away if you develop a rash or have trouble breathing.

Following your doctor's treatment recommendations is important for improving and maintaining your health and well-being.

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