

Taking an Antidepressant (SSRI): Your Daily Guide

Mental Health • Anxiety & Mood Disorders

SSRIs are medicines for depression and anxiety. They help your brain use serotonin, a natural mood chemical. They work slowly, so take them every day and watch for warning signs.

Give it time

- Sleep and energy often get better first.
- Your mood gets better over 2 to 6 weeks.
- Take it every day, even before you feel better and after you feel well.

Never stop suddenly

- **Do not stop this medicine on your own.** Stopping fast causes dizziness, upset stomach, bad mood, poor sleep, and "electric shock" feelings.
- When it is time to stop, your provider lowers the dose slowly.
- Refill early so you never run out.

Common side effects

- Upset stomach, headache, and sleep changes often ease in 1 to 2 weeks.
- Take it with food if it upsets your stomach.
- Changes in sex drive are common. Tell your provider. Do not just stop.

Be careful with other things you take

- Do not drink alcohol.
- Ask your pharmacist before any new medicine or herb, including tramadol, migraine medicines, St. John's wort, and ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin).

Watch for mood changes

- People under 25 have a higher risk of new thoughts of suicide, mainly in the first weeks and after a dose change.
- Family: watch for new worry, anger, restlessness, or poor sleep.

Call your provider today if you have

- New or worse sadness, worry, anger, or trouble sleeping
- Thoughts of suicide without a plan: **call or text 988 (or your local crisis line) now**
- Very high energy, little need for sleep, or racing thoughts

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- A plan or strong urge to hurt yourself
- Restlessness or confusion, fever, heavy sweating, shaking, a fast heartbeat, and diarrhea, mainly after a new medicine
- A seizure, fainting, or too many pills taken

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/antidepressants-ssri/patient

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