

Medication Information

SSRIs (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors)

Prozac (fluoxetine), Paxil (paroxetine), Zoloft (sertraline), Celexa (citalopram), Lexapro (escitalopram), Luvox (fluvoxamine)

SSRIs are medications used as antidepressants as well as to treat anxiety disorders and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). The daily dosage range varies among the specific medications, and it may take 2-4 weeks before the full effects are noticed.

Precautions: SSRIs need to be taken on a regular basis to be of benefit and should not be discontinued suddenly. Because these medications can cause drowsiness, dizziness, or blurred vision, do not drive or operate heavy machinery until you know how you will be affected. It is best to avoid any use of alcohol or street drugs when taking these medications. If there is a possibility you may become pregnant or breast feed, consult with your physician, as these medications can increase the chances of miscarriage or birth defects. SSRIs should not be taken within 14 days of treatment with a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI), and caution is indicated in taking them along with a tricyclic antidepressant (TCA). Occasionally, children and young adults treated with antidepressants may experience the onset or worsening of suicidal thoughts and impulses. These medications may worsen osteoporosis in elderly patients.

Common side effects include: nausea, drowsiness, weakness, tremors, nervousness, dizziness, nightmares, sweating, blurred vision, sexual dysfunction, weight gain, apathy, muscle spasms, slowed pulse, low blood pressure, and low serum sodium. Other adverse effects not listed here may occur. Contact your physician if you develop any unusual or disturbing symptoms.

Alternate Treatments: Other medications used to treat depression include other Effexor, Remeron, Wellbutrin, Trazodone, Cymbalta, TCAs, and MAOIs. Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is often effective in severe depression resistant to medication treatment. Other medications used to treat anxiety include Benzodiazepines, Beta-blockers, and Buspar. Certain "natural" substances have been found helpful in milder forms of depression and anxiety. These are not as well studied, may be manufactured with less quality control, can cause adverse reactions, and are usually less predictably effective than medication. They include St John's Wort, DL phenylalanine, SAMe, 5-HTP, GABA, L-glutamine, Valerian root, and Kava Kava. Various forms of psychotherapy are often also beneficial. Left untreated, depressive and anxiety disorders tend to become more severe and chronic.