



- Antidepressant and antipsychotic medications may take 6 weeks or more to fully work.
- Discuss all side effects with a doctor or pharmacist. Some side effects may get better as the body gets used to the medicine.
- Some people need medications for a short time and others need it long-term.
- If the person stops taking medication all of a sudden, their problems with depression, anxiety, mood or thinking may come back. The person may also feel signs of withdrawal.
- It is very important to talk with a doctor before suddenly stopping these medications.

*Amber Finegan, PharmD, February 2019*

## Antidepressants

Antidepressant medications are used to help with symptoms of depression and anxiety. Symptoms of depression can be sad mood, hopelessness, guilt, and low energy.<sup>1</sup> Symptoms of anxiety can be worries that are hard to control, feeling on edge, and poor concentration.<sup>2</sup>

### When will the medication work?<sup>1,2,3</sup>

- In the first few days, the person may have better sleeping and eating habits.
- In the first 1-3 weeks, the person may have better memory, sex drive, and self-care habits. They may also feel like they have more energy and start to have less anxiety.
- After 2-4 weeks, the person may start to have a better mood, less feelings of hopelessness, and less suicidal thoughts. They may also start to feel interested in hobbies again.
- It may take 6-8 weeks for the medication to fully work.

### What are the common side effects?<sup>1,4</sup>

These are most common in the beginning, and usually get better within 1-2 weeks.

- Headache
- Upset stomach, diarrhea
- Sleepiness or feeling more awake

Some antidepressants can cause sexual problems, such as a decrease in sex drive or problems with ejaculation.

### How long do people need to take this medication?<sup>1,2</sup>

Some people need to take medicine for up to 1 year after they feel better. Others need to take medicine long-term to prevent their symptoms of depression or anxiety from coming back. The length of time depends on how bad the depression or anxiety was, how long they had it, and how many times they have had depression or anxiety in the past.

## Antipsychotics

Antipsychotic medications are used to help with mood and problems with clear thinking. They may also help with hearing voices or seeing things that aren't there (hallucinations) and ideas that are not based in real life (delusions).<sup>5</sup>

### When will the medication work?<sup>5,6</sup>

- In the first 1-3 days, the person may feel less upset and angry.
- After 1-2 weeks, the person may have a better mood and self-care habits. The person may start to have more clear thoughts, less hallucinations, and less delusions.
- It may take 4-6 weeks for the medication to fully work.

### What are the common side effects?<sup>5</sup>

These are most common in the beginning, and most will usually get better with time.

- Sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Upset stomach
- Increased appetite

### How long do people need to take this medication?

Some people need to take medicine for 1 to 2 years after their mood or thinking gets better. Others need to take medicine long-term to stop their mood and thinking from getting worse. The length of time depends on how bad the problems with mood or thinking were, how long they had problems, and how many times they have had problems in the past.



Go online to find more information about what to expect from your medications and to view the references for this toolkit.

[cpnp.org/390204](https://cpnp.org/390204)

**Important Disclosure:** This information is being provided as a community outreach effort of the College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists. This information is for educational and informational purposes only and is not medical advice. This information contains a summary of important points and is not an exhaustive review of information about the topic. Always seek the advice of a physician or other qualified medical professional with any questions you may have regarding medications or medical conditions. Never delay seeking professional medical advice or disregard medical professional advice as a result of any information provided herein. The College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists disclaims any and all liability alleged as a result of the information provided herein.