

Provider Notice

To: PerformCare Provider Network
From: PerformCare, Pennsylvania
Date: October 30, 2023
Subject: Antidepressant Medication – Toolkit 2

In this three-part series, PerformCare will be distributing resources to assist with diagnosing and treating depression. Each part of this toolkit includes information for clinicians assisting Members living with a depressive disorder. An educational handout is included with each installation.

Please distribute this material to all clinical staff.

Part 1 of this toolkit highlighted the importance of routine screening for depression. In this second part, information and resources about antidepressant medication therapy is presented. The resources below provide ready access to relevant research, information about antidepressant medication, and can be used in clinical work and/or provided to Members.

Antidepressant Medication for Depression:[Antidepressant Medication are Effective in Treating Depression](#)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0140673617328027?via%3Dihub>

This link allows readers to review a 2018 meta-analysis that summarizes recently published studies. This is one of the largest analyses that has occurred and compares the efficacy of 21 different types of antidepressant medication. Results showed that all antidepressant medications were more effective than a placebo. However, some antidepressant medications were better tolerated (e.g., fewer side effects) than others, a finding that has important implications when considering treatment adherence. Additionally, links to other meta-analyses (and further research) can be found at this site.

[Antidepressants May be Most Effective for Moderate, Severe, and Chronic Depression](#)

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK361016/>

This website offers a general overview of antidepressant medication, concluding that the best results of medication therapy may occur in patients with moderate or higher levels of depression. In general, the more severe the symptoms of depression, the more efficacious the use of antidepressant medication may be. For those with chronic and recurrent symptoms, medication may also aid in relapse prevention.

[Comparison of Tolerability and Dropout Rates Between Two Classes of Antidepressants](#)

<https://synapse.koreamed.org/articles/1094715>

This review examined side effect profiles of first- and second-generation antidepressants, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors, serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors, mirtazapine, and bupropion, versus tricyclic antidepressants. Results showed some people had more side effects with the tricyclic antidepressants than with the other categories of antidepressants. In addition to the greater likelihood of experiencing side effects, people taking tricyclic antidepressants had higher treatment dropout rates.

[Gastrointestinal Side Effect Profiles of Common Antidepressants](#)

https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0278584621000257?casa_token=A9NqBLKgVmgAAAAA:DYpJ8Qoxc6nDKaxVQ3-0wQp1biXkdDdFw8Fr5eILdJXvcQveYS-GJ_YvfUvKW241eLbbh4C2idY

Some Members may experience gastrointestinal issues related to the use of antidepressant medication. This may impact longer-term medication adherence rates. This meta-analysis provides profiles of gastrointestinal side effects experienced by people treated with some of the most common second-generation antidepressants. The specific tolerability profile of each compound should be considered by clinicians when prescribing antidepressant medication in order to improve adherence to treatment and increase positive outcomes in patients with depression.

[Sexual Side Effects of Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors \(SSRIs\)](#)

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.2147/NDT.S185757>

As with gastrointestinal issues, sexual side effects while taking antidepressant medication may be reported. When this is not addressed it may lead to an increased risk of treatment nonadherence. This article offers suggestions and strategies for effective management of sexual side effects.

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PAGE WITH MEMBERS**

Depression & Medication Treatment

Depression is one of the most common medical conditions and affects millions of people every day.

The economic costs and impact of depression upon a person's quality of life can be enormous.

Fortunately, effective treatment options are available. One such option is medication. **Antidepressant medication** has been available for more than seven decades.

Our understanding of antidepressant medications, how they work, and side effects have increased greatly. Medication can help to reduce feelings of sadness and prevent them from coming back. For this to happen, medication must be taken as prescribed. **You** remain a valuable partner in effectively managing your treatment.

Like therapy, antidepressant medication can help with depression

Opinions vary on how effective antidepressant medication can be in relieving symptoms of [depression](#). Some people doubt that they work well, while others consider them essential. Like many other treatments, these medications may help in some situations and not in others. They are effective for moderate, severe, and chronic depression. Medication can have side effects, so it is important to discuss the pros and cons of antidepressant medication with your doctor.

The main goal of treatment with antidepressant medication is to relieve the symptoms of severe [depression](#) and prevent them from coming back. They are meant to make you feel emotionally stable and help you follow a normal daily routine. Medication can relieve symptoms such as restlessness, anxiety and sleep problems, and prevent thoughts of self-harm.

ANTIDEPRESSANT THERAPY FOR DEPRESSION

Antidepressants help balance the brain chemicals that regulate mood. It can take 3-4 weeks for the medicine to begin to take effect and up to a few months to take full effect. It is important to take medication as directed. If you stop taking medication too soon, your symptoms may return. You and your doctor can discuss a plan for when and how to stop taking medicine. Although you can't get addicted or "hooked," stopping too quickly can cause withdrawal symptoms. If one medication does not work, you may want to consider trying another. If you forget to take your medication, do not take a double dose. Take your next dose at the regular time.

Like all medications, antidepressants can cause side effects. Side effects of antidepressants do not last long. Be sure to inform your doctor right away if you have serious side effects, as your doctor can help.

The most common side effects include:

- Headaches.
- Nausea (feeling sick to your stomach).
- Sleeplessness or drowsiness.
- Agitation (feeling jittery).
- Sexual problems.
- Dry mouth.
- Constipation.
- Bladder problems.
- Blurred vision.
- Drowsiness.

Helpful hints to manage common side-effects

- If your medicine upsets your stomach, ask your doctor if you should take it with a meal.
- If your medicine makes you sleepy during the day or keeps you awake at night, ask your doctor about changing the time that you take your medication.
- Don't take depression medicine with alcohol. Even a little alcohol can affect how well the medicine works. It is best to not drink alcohol at all until you are fully recovered.
- If you have dry mouth, chew gum or sip water throughout the day.