

Antidepressant Medication and YOU

How do the medications work?



The brain uses chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, to send signals to different parts of the brain and the body. In young people with depression certain neurotransmitters may not be working the right way. The antidepressant medications help these neurotransmitters work better. Different antidepressant medications work on different neurotransmitters. That is why sometimes one medication will work better than another, and sometimes more than one medication will need to be tried before finding the one that works best for you. Also new medications and treatments are being developed and tested all the time.

How will medication help me?

Antidepressant medications may help you have:

- Improved mood
- Better concentration
- More normal appetite
- More normal sleeping
- Greater interest in activities
- More energy
- Improved self-esteem



Will taking medication change who I am?



You may be concerned about taking medication. You may think that it will make you different from other young people or that it will change who you are. These things aren't true. Medication will help you get back to the way you were before you became depressed, so you feel like yourself again. Taking medication is really no different than using glasses or wearing braces – it's only a tool to help you.

What are the problems with taking medications?

Like all medical treatments, there can be side effects with these medications. Side effects are usually very mild and tend to disappear as you continue to take the medication or as the dose is changed. Sometimes the side effects may continue, and this usually means that the doctor will change the medication. Some common side effects are:

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| difficulty sleeping | headaches | irritability |
| upset stomach | dry mouth | blurry vision |

Specific side effects can be found in the individual medication information sheets. Make sure you tell your doctor if you experience any side effects. Your doctor may change the dose or switch to another medication.

How long will I have to take medication?



If the medication is helpful and you have no problems with it, you will probably continue to take the medication for a number of months, even after you feel better, to make sure the depression is gone. If your doctor decides to stop the medication, it will be slowly decreased over a number of weeks. Antidepressant medication should never be stopped without first talking to your doctor. Sometimes young people who have been depressed will become depressed again, so it is important to notice if your symptoms return. If you do become depressed again, you will probably be restarted on medication.



What is my role in taking medication for depression?

It is your responsibility to take your medication in the right amount at the right time. You should not take any other medication (even over-the-counter) without talking to your doctor first. And you should never use alcohol or drugs while taking medication; it is very dangerous and can be deadly. It is also your responsibility to never share your medication with anyone else. It can be harmful, and it is illegal. Most importantly, you should talk openly with your doctor about any problems and work together as a team in making decisions about medications.