

SSRIs

Brown Wellness Patient Education Series

What are SSRIs?

SSRIs stand for selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors. Although SSRIs are commonly called “antidepressants,” this type of medication is used to treat a variety of conditions including depression, anxiety, and obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD).

- SSRIs are the first-line medications for treating depression & anxiety
- In general, these medications can help improve your mood and make it easier to do everyday tasks.
- Commonly prescribed SSRIs include:
 - Fluoxetine (brand name Prozac)
 - Sertraline (brand name Zoloft)
 - Escitalopram (brand name Lexapro)

How do I know which SSRI is right for me?

Your healthcare provider will work with you to determine which medication is right for you. If the first medication prescribed is not helping enough or is causing unwanted side effects, talk with your provider and they may recommend another option.

- You may need to try a few different medications until you find one that works for you.
- Sometimes another medication can be added when one medication is not effective.

How long will it take to work?

You may notice some improvement within 2 weeks of starting the medication. However, it usually takes about 4-8 weeks to notice the full effects.

- If you do not feel any improvement in the first 4 weeks of treatment, you can speak with your provider about their recommendations.

What are the side effects?

The most common side effects are nausea, headaches, decreased sex drive, and feeling

“jittery.” Some patients also have noticed fatigue and difficulty sleeping.

- Many side effects go away after taking the medication consistently for 1-2 weeks.
- If side effects are severe or if they persist longer than 2 weeks, speak with your prescriber about options that can help.

Rarely, patients taking SSRIs may develop serotonin syndrome. When this occurs it is typically due to taking multiple different medications or other substances that increase the amount of serotonin in your body. If you experience a high fever, changes in heart rate or blood pressure, muscle rigidity, or confusion while taking this medication you should call 911 immediately.

How do I take this medication safely?

Take your medication as prescribed by your provider. It might help to have a pill box or reminder to take your medication at the same time every day to prevent missing or repeating doses. Drinking alcohol while taking SSRIs may increase side effects of dizziness, drowsiness and feeling less alert. If you are experiencing side effects, worsening depression, or suicidal thoughts please call your provider, or 911 immediately.

Additional Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline – text 988 or call 800-273-TALK (8255)

Crisis Text Line – Text HOME to 741741 -free 24/7 support via text message from trained counselor.

CAPS On Demand 24/7– Call 401-863-3476

Brown Public Safety 24/7 Call 401-863-4111

Health Services 24/7 Nurse Advice Line Call 401-863-3953