

If you are struggling with symptoms of depression and/or anxiety, you may consider taking medication. Talk therapy is also a very effective treatment for both anxiety and depression, either with medications or in place of them. If you have any questions about the best treatment plan for you, consult with your provider and ask them to explain your options.

Below are some common questions about antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications. Your provider can address any additional questions you may have.

What kind of medication will I be prescribed?

The most commonly prescribed medications are selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs). You may recognize names such as Zoloft, Prozac, and Cymbalta; these are all brand names of SSRIs and SNRIs on the market.

How do they work?

SSRIs and SNRIs both work to change the levels of certain neurotransmitters within your brain. Both can be effective for anxiety and depression, but you may need to try a few before you find the best option for you.

How long will it take to feel the effects?

It typically takes 4-6 weeks to see the benefits of these medications. Your provider will start you on a low dose and then slowly increase the dose until you find an effective dose.

How will my provider choose which medication to give me?

There are many options to treat anxiety and depression so it may take some time to find the right medication for you. Your provider will consider and discuss factors such as symptoms, your medical, treatment, and family histories, side effects, cost, and any preferences you may have.

Are there side effects?

While side effects are common, they are typically unpleasant rather than dangerous. You may experience nausea, weight gain, sleep problems, and/or increased anxiety when you first start taking your medications. For many people these improve within a few weeks.

Talk to your provider about any side effects you experience. They may have suggestions to help manage symptoms, want to adjust the dosage, or try an extended-release formulation. If those adjustments don't help your provider may consider trying a different medication.

Immediately tell your provider if you have any thoughts of suicide, wanting to die, being better off dead, and/or of hurting yourself or others. Call 911 if it is an emergency.

Are they addictive or habit forming?

No. Stopping the medication may cause uncomfortable discontinuation symptoms such as nausea and fatigue but this is different from physical withdrawal. Working with your provider to slowly taper your medication if you want to stop taking it can help minimize discontinuation symptoms.

How long will I have to take this medication?

This is different for everyone. Your provider will assess how well your treatment is working and can recommend when to stop the medication.

What if I want to stop taking this medication?

Never stop taking your medication without discussing with your provider. You have the final say in whether or not you take a medication. If you decide you no longer want to take it your provider can help you do so safely.

Your provider will gradually reduce your dose over several weeks. This will help minimize discontinuation symptoms.

What if the medication doesn't help?

If you don't see improvements your provider may want to try a different medication. It is common to try more than one medication before finding the best option. Everybody responds differently to these medications.

How can I remember to take this medication every day?

Establishing a medication routine can help you remember to take your medication every day. You may consider taking your medication before or after something else you do every day, such as brushing your teeth. Pet owners have suggested giving your pet a treat when you take your medication – even if you forget your cat or dog can help you remember!

Some people find phone or calendar reminders and/or alarms useful as a visual and/or audio cue. There are medication reminder apps freely available. You may also find pill boxes or timer caps helpful, especially if you struggle to remember if you've already taken your medication that day.