The Know Your Medicine brochure series includes:

- Cholesterol
- Depression
- Diabetes (Type 2)
- Heart Failure
- High Blood Pressure
- Osteoporosis

The ElderCare Patient Education series includes:

- Aging and Your Response to Medicines
- Alcohol: Friend or Foe?
- The Caregiver's Guide to Using Medicine
- Choosing the Right Nonprescription Medicine
- The Consumer's Quick Reference to Using Medicines
- Eye Medicines: May Be More Than Meets the Eye
- Home Safety Issues
- How to Select Your Pharmacy and Pharmacist
- Medicines and Travel
- Personal Medicine Record
- Questions You May Have About Generic Medicines
- Vitamins Are Not Enough

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Depression

Growing older comes with many hardships: lifestyle changes, medical conditions, and loss of loved ones. Trying as these are, depression is not a normal response to aging, disease, or living in a nursing home. It is a serious chronic illness. Successful treatment starts with recognizing and understanding your condition.

What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Depression?

Depression occurs in episodes that last longer than two weeks. For those who have lost a loved one, depression is diagnosed when symptoms last more than two months. Each episode of depression increases the chance of having another.

Major Symptoms
- Depressed mood for long periods
- Decreased interest, or pleasure, in activities

It Is Important to...

- Take your medicine exactly as directed by your doctor.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist about side effects or improvements.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist about any over-the-counter medicines and vitamins you are taking.
- Allow time for your medicine to work

It could take 8 to 12 weeks for you to feel the full effect.

Treatment for first-time episodes could last 6 months, then be slowly discontinued.

Treatment for additional episodes may last years or be lifelong.

You may notice side effects before feeling relief from depression.

If you have problems with side effects, contact your doctor or pharmacist before you make any change in your regimen.

Never stop taking a medicine without first talking to your doctor.
What If Medicines Don't Work?

Electroconvulsive therapy (once called "shock therapy") is often effective for the severely depressed and for patients who do not respond to medicine. The procedure only takes a few minutes and is done under general anesthesia. It can cause memory problems, confusion, and, occasionally, irregular heart beats.

Additional Symptoms
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Insomnia or excessive sleepiness
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Poor concentration
- Restlessness, difficulty sitting still
- Sluggishness, difficulty getting moving
- Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt
- Suicidal thoughts, plans, or attempts

As many as 20% of elderly people living at home and up to 37% of those in nursing homes have symptoms of depression. Sometimes, older adults don't mention a "depressed mood." Instead they complain about headaches, stomach problems, inability to concentrate, low energy, or forgetfulness.
Medical Illnesses Associated With Depression

Symptoms from other medical conditions sometimes overlap or obscure the symptoms of depression. Depression can even make the symptoms of other conditions worse.

Depression occurs in...

- half of people with Parkinson's disease, cancer or heart disease.
- 1 in 3 people who have had strokes.

Depression is also common in patients with...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AIDS</th>
<th>Alzheimer's disease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>anemias</td>
<td>chronic fatigue syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>congestive heart failure</td>
<td>coronary artery disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diabetes mellitus</td>
<td>fibromyalgia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypo or hyperthyroidism</td>
<td>malnutrition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>malnutrition</td>
<td>multiple sclerosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>myocardial infarction</td>
<td>osteoarthritis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pneumonia</td>
<td>rheumatoid arthritis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tuberculosis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generic Name | Brand Name
--- | ---
venlafaxine   | Effexor

Side Effects
Nausea, dizziness, nervousness, constipation, tremor, sweating, and sexual dysfunction.

Should be used cautiously by people with high blood pressure and heart disease.
### Other Commonly Prescribed Antidepressants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>trazodone</td>
<td>Desyrel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nefazodone</td>
<td>Serzone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Side Effects**
Trazodone can cause sedation and drops in blood pressure, both of which can cause falls and subsequent injury.

Nefazodone can cause sedation, dizziness, and constipation. If you are taking nefazodone, avoid drinking grapefruit juice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>buproprion</td>
<td>Wellbutrin</td>
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</table>

**Side Effects**
Weight loss.

Should not be used by people with seizure disorders, a history of alcoholism, central nervous system tumors, head injuries, or strokes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mirtazapine</td>
<td>Remeron</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Side Effects**
Sedation, dizziness, dry mouth, constipation, and significant weight gain.

### Medicines Associated With Depression

Many types of medicine are associated with the symptoms of depression.

**Antibiotics**
- ampicillin
- ciprofloxacin
- enoxacin
- lomefloxacin
- metronidazole
- norfloxacin
- ofloxacin
- sulfonamides (Bactrim)
- tetracycline

**Barbiturates**
- phenobarbital
- primidone

**Benzodiazepines**
- clonazepam
- diazepam

**Chemotherapy Medicines**

**Corticosteroids**
- dexamethasone
- prednisone

**Gastrointestinal Medicines**
- cimetidine
Heart Medicines
beta-blockers (e.g., propranolol, metoprolol)
clonidine
digoxin
guanethidine
hydralazine
methyldopa
reserpine, prazosin

Hormones
hydrocortisone
estrogen
progesterone

Pain Medicines/Analgesics
codeine
fentanyl
hydrocodone
ibuprofen
indomethacin
morphine
oxycodone
phenylbutazone
propoxyphene

Anti-Parkinson’s Medicines
levodopa/carbidopa
pergolide
selegiline

Sleep Aids
chloral hydrate

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>phenelzine</td>
<td>Nardil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tranylcypromine</td>
<td>Parnate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Side Effects
Anxiety, agitation, sedation, weight gain, swelling of the hands and feet, sexual problems, increased heart rate, and heart palpitations.

When taking these medicines you must avoid foods that contain tyramine. Tyramine isn't usually listed on food labels but is found in

- aged cheeses
- smoked meats
- red wines
Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>fluoxetine</td>
<td>Prozac</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fluvoxamine</td>
<td>Luvox</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>paroxetine</td>
<td>Paxil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sertraline</td>
<td>Zoloft</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>citalopram</td>
<td>Celexa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Side Effects**
Anxiety, insomnia, headaches, sexual problems, and stomach upset. Combining drugs that affect your serotonin levels can lead to “serotonin syndrome,” causing tremors, uncontrolled muscle movements, anxiety, agitation, confusion, fever, sweating, shivering, diarrhea, and abdominal pain.

**Avoid taking**
- cough syrups that contain dextromethorphan
- St. John’s Wort
- diet pills

When your doctor determines that you no longer need these medicines, your dose should be gradually decreased over several weeks. If stopped abruptly, you may experience withdrawal effects, such as dizziness, nausea, sleepiness, vivid dreams, irritability, and feeling depressed again.

**Treatment can…**
- ease symptoms
- reduce the risk of relapse
- improve quality of life

All treatments should begin with a caregiver educating the patient and family about the seriousness of depression.

Treatments for depression do not work quickly; they require patience.

**What Can I Do?**
- Exercise
- Stay active
- Eat well-balanced meals

**Which Therapies Help?**
For mild to moderate depression, many types of therapy increase self-esteem and social interaction.
- Individual or group therapy
- Music, art, or pet therapy
Which Medicines Help?

Antidepressants work by increasing the amounts of neurotransmitters in the brain. These medicines are effective in about 70% of patients, and they are all equal in their ability to treat depression. Often, the dose must be gradually increased before you notice the full effect.

People who don’t respond well to one type of medicine or experience too many side effects may need to try a different medicine. Sometimes a doctor will choose a medicine for its side effects, for example, choosing one that causes drowsiness for a person who has trouble sleeping.

Before prescribing medicine for depression, your doctor should make sure that...

- your other medical conditions are being properly treated.
- your current medicines aren’t making your symptoms of depression worse.

Tricyclic Antidepressants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic Name</th>
<th>Brand Name</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>amitriptyline</td>
<td>Elavil and Endep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>imipramine</td>
<td>Tofranil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doxepin</td>
<td>Sinequan and Adapin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clomipramine</td>
<td>Anafranil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desipramine</td>
<td>Norpramin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nortriptyline</td>
<td>Aventyl and Pamelo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>protriptyline</td>
<td>Vivactil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trimipramine</td>
<td>Surmontil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Side Effects
Dry mouth, constipation, blurred vision, confusion, disorientation, drowsiness, and effects on the heart (decrease in blood pressure, irregular heartbeats, increases in heart rate). Taking too much can cause serious injury or even death.

Should be used with caution by people with heart disease, Parkinson’s disease, Alzheimer’s dementia, glaucoma, enlarged prostate, and stroke.