

Drug Treatment of Depression

What Are Antidepressants?

Antidepressant medications help stabilize the amount of special chemicals in your brain. Your doctor may start you on selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which are very effective in treating depression and are taken once a day.

These medications include Celexa (citalopram) Paxil (panxetine), Prozac (fluoxetine), or Zoloft (sertraline). The prices of these medications may vary, but they generally cost \$65 to \$85 per month.

Tricyclic antidepressants are an older, sometimes less expensive type of medicine for depression. These drugs are effective, but have side effects that can be particularly troubling in older persons.

Other useful antidepressants include Effexor (venlafaxine), Serzone (nefazodine), Remeron (mirtazapine) and Wellbutrin (bupropion).

What Are the Side Effects?

The most common side effects of SSRIs include nausea, diarrhea, and headaches. If you have any of these side effects, they are usually mild and disappear in the first few weeks.

Even if you experience mild side effects from the medicine, you should still take it until it has a chance to help you. If the side effects are more troublesome, call or visit your doctor to discuss changing medicine or dosage.

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***How Long Does
Drug Treatment
Take?***

Treatment with antidepressant medications takes 4 to 6 weeks to change the brain chemicals and relieve the depression.

Antidepressants are not addictive or habit forming, and they do not make you high. The only thing that you may feel from the medicine is the side effects, which are usually unpleasant.

In general, you will probably take the antidepressant for at least 6 to 9 months, but your doctor will determine, along with you, the length of time you should take this medicine. A common reason medicine doesn't help depression is that the medicine is stopped before it has enough time to work. It is important to continue taking the medicine every day, even if you start to feel better.