

Antidepressants

Antidepressants are medications commonly used to treat depression. Antidepressants are also used for other health conditions, such as anxiety, pain and insomnia. Although antidepressants are not FDA-approved specifically to treat ADHD, antidepressants are sometimes used to treat ADHD in adults.

Examples of antidepressants include; but are not limited to:

Fluoxetine	Duloxetine
Citalopram	Desvenlafaxine
Sertraline	Venlafaxine
Paroxetine	Mirtazapine
Escitalopram	Bupropion

Some antidepressants may cause more side effects than others. You may need to try several different antidepressant medications before finding the one that improves your symptoms and that causes side effects that you can manage.

The most common side effects listed by the FDA include; but are not limited to:

- Nausea and vomiting**
- Weight gain**
- Diarrhea**
- Sleepiness**
- Sexual problems**
- Thoughts about suicide or dying**
- Attempts to commit suicide**
- New or worsening depression**
- New or worsening anxiety**
- Feeling very agitated or restless**
- Panic attacks**
- Trouble sleeping (insomnia)**
- New or worsening irritability**
- Acting aggressively, being angry, or violent**
- Acting on dangerous impulses**
- An extreme increase in activity and talking (mania)**
- Other unusual changes in behavior or mood**

Anti-Anxiety Medications

Anti-anxiety medications help reduce the symptoms of anxiety, such as panic attacks, or extreme fear and worry. The most common anti-anxiety medications are called benzodiazepines. Benzodiazepines can treat generalized anxiety disorder. In the case of panic disorder or social phobia (social anxiety disorder), benzodiazepines are usually second-line treatments, behind SSRIs or other antidepressants. Benzodiazepines should never be taken while you are consuming alcohol or taking opiates. Beta blockers and Buspirone are also used to treat anxiety.

Benzodiazepines used to treat anxiety disorders include; but are not limited to:

Clonazepam
Alprazolam
Lorazepam

Buspirone (non-benzodiazepine)
Propranolol (beta-blocker)

Like other medications, anti-anxiety medications may cause side effects. Some of these side effects and risks are serious. The most common side effects for benzodiazepines are drowsiness and dizziness. Other possible side effects include; but are not limited to:

Nausea
Blurred vision
Headache

Confusion
Tiredness
Nightmares

Tell your doctor if any of these symptoms are severe or do not go away:

Unsteadiness
Difficulty thinking or remembering
Increased saliva
Changes in sex drive or ability

Problems with coordination
Frequent urination
Muscle or joint pain

If you experience any of the symptoms below, call your doctor immediately:

Rash
Hives
Swelling of the eyes, face, lips, tongue, or throat
Difficulty breathing or swallowing
Hoarseness
Seizures

Seizures
Depression
Yellowing of the skin or eyes
Thoughts of suicide or self-harm
Difficulty Breathing

Common side effects of beta-blockers include:

Fatigue
Cold Hands

Dizziness or light headedness
Weakness

Beta-blockers generally are not recommended for people with asthma or diabetes because they may worsen symptoms related to both.

Possible side effects from buspirone include:

Dizziness
Headaches
Nausea
Nervousness

Light headedness
Excitement
Trouble Sleeping

Stimulants

As the name suggests, stimulants increase alertness, attention, and energy, as well as elevate blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 2014). Stimulant medications are often prescribed to treat children, adolescents, or adults diagnosed with ADHD.

Stimulants used to treat ADHD include; but are not limited to:

Methylphenidate
Amphetamine
Dextroamphetamine
Lisdexamfetamine Dimesylate

Strattera (nonstimulant)

Stimulants may cause side effects. Most side effects are minor and disappear when dosage levels are lowered. The most common side effects include:

Difficulty falling or staying asleep
Loss of appetite
Stomach pain
Headache

Less common side effects include:

Motor tics or verbal tics (sudden, repetitive movements or sounds)
Personality changes, such as appearing “flat” or without emotion

Non Stimulant Medications Include:

Clonidine
Guanfacine

Side effects of clonidine or guanfacine may include:

Sedation
Lower blood pressure
Dizziness

Antipsychotics

Antipsychotic medicines are primarily used to manage psychosis. The word “[psychosis](#)” is used to describe conditions that affect the mind, and in which there has been some loss of contact with reality, often including delusions (false, fixed beliefs) or hallucinations (hearing or seeing things that are not really there). It can be a symptom of a physical condition such as drug abuse or a mental disorder such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, or very severe depression (also known as “psychotic depression”).

Antipsychotic medications are often used in combination with other medications to treat delirium, and mental health conditions.

Older or first-generation antipsychotic medications are also called conventional "typical" antipsychotics or “neuroleptics”. Some of the common typical antipsychotics include; but are not limited to:

Chlorpromazine
Haloperidol

Perphenazine
Fluphenazine

Newer or second generation medications are also called "atypical" antipsychotics. Some of the common atypical antipsychotics include; but are not limited to:

Risperidone
Olanzapine
Quetiapine
Ziprasidone

Aripiprazole
Paliperidone
Lurasidone

What are the possible side effects of antipsychotics?

Antipsychotics have many side effects (or adverse events) and risks. The FDA lists the following side effects of antipsychotic medicines:

Drowsiness
Dizziness
Restlessness
Weight gain
Dry Mouth
Constipation
Low white blood cell count

Nausea
Vomiting
Blurred vision
Low blood pressure
Uncontrollable movements
Seizures

A person taking an atypical antipsychotic medication should have his or her weight, glucose levels, and lipid levels monitored regularly by a doctor.

Typical antipsychotic medications can also cause additional side effects related to physical movement, such as:

Rigidity
Tremors

Persistent muscle spasms

Mood Stabilizers

Mood stabilizers are used primarily to treat bipolar disorder, mood swings associated with other mental disorders, and in some cases, to augment the effect of other medications used to treat depression. Lithium, which is an effective mood stabilizer, is approved for the treatment of mania and the maintenance treatment of bipolar disorder. A number of cohort studies describe anti-suicide benefits of lithium for individuals on long-term maintenance. Mood stabilizers work by decreasing abnormal activity in the brain.

Anticonvulsant medications are also used as mood stabilizers. They were originally developed to treat seizures, but they were found to help control unstable moods as well. One anticonvulsant commonly used as a mood stabilizer is valproic acid (also called divalproex sodium). For some people, especially those with “mixed” symptoms of mania and depression or those with rapid-cycling bipolar disorder, valproic acid may work better than lithium.

Other anticonvulsants used as mood stabilizers include:

Carbamazepine
Lamotrigine

Oxcarbazepine

What are the possible side effects of mood stabilizers?

Mood stabilizers can cause several side effects, and some of them may become serious, especially at excessively high blood levels. These side effects include; but are not limited to

Itching, rash
Excessive thirst
Frequent urination
Tremors
Nausea and vomiting
Slurred speech
Irregular heart

Blackouts
Changes in vision
Seizures
Hallucinations
Loss of coordination
Swelling

If a person with bipolar disorder is being treated with lithium, he or she should visit the doctor regularly to check the lithium levels in his or her blood, and make sure the kidneys and the thyroid are working normally. Talk to your doctor before taking any over-the-counter or prescription medications as these may have interactions with lithium.

Lithium is eliminated from the body through the kidney, so the dose may need to be lowered in older people with reduced kidney function. Also, loss of water from the body, such as through sweating or diarrhea, can cause the lithium level to rise, requiring a temporary lowering of the daily dose. Although kidney functions are checked periodically during lithium treatment, actual damage of the kidney is uncommon in people whose blood levels of lithium have stayed within the therapeutic range.

Some possible side effects linked anticonvulsants (such as valproic acid) include:

Drowsiness

Dizziness

Headache

Diarrhea

Constipation

Changes in appetite

Weight changes

Back pain

Agitation

Mood swings

Abnormal thinking

Uncontrollable shaking

Loss of coordination

Uncontrolled eye movements

Blurred or double vision

ringing in the ears

Hair loss

These medications may also:

- Cause damage to the liver or pancreas, so people taking it should see their doctors regularly
- Increase testosterone (a male hormone) levels in teenage girls and lead to a condition called polycystic ovarian syndrome (a disease that can affect fertility and make the menstrual cycle become irregular)

To report any serious adverse effects associated with the use of these medicines, please contact the FDA MedWatch program using the contact information at the bottom of this page. For more information about the risks and side effects for each individual medication, please see Drugs@FDA.