

Antidepressants for the treatment of depression in children and adolescents

For more information check out the websites and telephone services below:



WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU? *continued...*

- During this time, it's important that you and your doctor be on the look out for any signs that might indicate that you're one of the people who could experience a bad reaction from this treatment
- You are encouraged to discuss these issues with your family
- Symptoms to look out for include feeling unusually restless, uptight or irritable, or if you notice an increase in suicidal thoughts or urges
- If you're worried, or if problems continue, contact your doctor straight away.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Depression is a very common medical condition
- Effective treatments are available and it's important to get help as soon as possible
- Counselling therapies are the recommended first-line of treatment for children and young people. Counselling helps in most cases
- In some cases a doctor may think that an SSRI antidepressant may also be necessary, particularly if your depression is severe, or it isn't improving with other treatments
- While there is a slight risk that SSRIs may increase suicidal thoughts and urges, the risk of this occurring is low
- Your doctor should provide you (and your family) with clear information about the pros and cons of taking an SSRI and the steps to take in a crisis situation or emergency
- Regular check-ups are important
- With the right treatment, the vast majority of young people make a full recovery from depression.

- **Ybblue www.ybblue.com.au**
Ybblue is the youth program of *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*. The Ybblue website provides information for young people who may be experiencing depression but also provides information and help for their family and friends. The website contains a number of informative fact sheets that are easily viewed and downloaded.
- **Head Room www.headroom.net.au**
This website aims to inform young people, their caregivers and service providers about positive mental health. Headroom has sections that cater specifically for young people aged 6-12 years, 12-18 years, parents, friends and service providers and professionals.
- **Just Ask – 1300 13 11 14**
Available 9am to 5pm EST. Lifeline's rural mental health information service.
- **Kids Help Line – 1800 551 800**
(free call) Available 24 hours. Counselling, information and referrals for young people.
- **Lifeline – 13 11 14**
Available 24 hours. Counselling, information and referrals.
- **MoodGYM www.moodgym.anu.edu.au**
MoodGYM is an interactive web program which is designed to prevent depression in young people. Log onto the website and go through training exercises designed to improve your understanding of moods and the way you cope with things.
- **Reachout! www.reachout.com.au**
Reachout! is an interactive website designed to help young people through tough times. Reachout! aims to provide support information and referrals in a format that is appeals to young people.

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A FACT SHEET FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

beyondblue is working to increase awareness and understanding of depression, anxiety and related disorders throughout Australia.

ABOUT DEPRESSION

Everybody feels sad or down sometimes. This can be because of some disappointment, frustration or stress in your life. Most of the time though, this sadness is short-term and doesn't stop you from getting on with your life.

Depression is more than short-term sadness. It's a medical condition that causes persistent changes to your thoughts, mood, behaviour and physical health. It also affects your enjoyment of life.

Effective treatments for depression, however, are available. It's important to get help as soon as possible, so that treatment can be started. An important part of managing your depression is talking to family or friends. Having someone you know and trust aware of your situation can help you.

WHAT TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

- Getting information about depression and how to recover from it is an important part of the treatment of depression
- In general, psychological and family therapies (counselling) are the main treatment for depression in children and young people
- Two therapies have been found to be especially helpful. One is called Cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and the other is Interpersonal therapy (IPT). Other types of talking therapy may also be useful
- CBT helps you to change the negative thinking that comes with depression. IPT helps you to deal with any hassles you may be having with family and friends
- Other ways to tackle depression such as stress management and tips to improve your sleep patterns can also be helpful
- Occasionally, antidepressant medicines can be used to treat young people with depression.

ARE ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS EFFECTIVE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

While antidepressant medicines can also be used to treat young people with depression, there's currently some debate among doctors about the benefits of these medicines for children and young people under 18 years of age. This is because most of the research that has been done to examine the effects of antidepressant medicines has involved adults (over 18 years of age), rather than children and young people.

- There are two main groups of antidepressant medicines. One is tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) and the other is selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- TCAs aren't recommended for children and young people with depression
- What we know about SSRIs isn't as clear. The small amount of research involving children and young people under the age of 18 years shows mixed results
- Overall, the research shows that at least one SSRI (fluoxetine) appears to be effective for the treatment of depression in young people. More research is needed on the others before we can be fully confident that they work.

ARE ANTIDEPRESSANT MEDICATIONS SAFE FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE?

- As with most medicines, SSRIs have some side-effects such as nausea and headaches. These problems, however, are usually mild and short-term
- Recently there has been concern about one particular side-effect that seems to be connected with the use of SSRIs. There seems to be an increase in suicidal thoughts and urges to act on these thoughts during the early stages of treatment in less than 5% of those treated

- These concerns have led health authorities in a number of countries to review all the available scientific studies relating to SSRI use in children and young people
- These reviews did find some evidence for an increase in the risk of suicidal thoughts and urges in young people taking these medications. This risk, however, appears to be quite low, with less than 5% of people affected in this way in the studies.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR YOU?

- Everyone is different, so the treatment for depression needs to be worked out to suit you. This means you will need to see your local doctor. You should also discuss this with your family
- If you're already taking one of these medicines, it's important not to stop taking them suddenly as this may cause an unpleasant 'withdrawal' reaction and make you feel worse
- Instead, if you're worried, speak with your doctor and ask for advice
- If you do decide to stop these medicines, it's best to do so slowly, with regular check-ups with your doctor
- If you have depression, your doctor may think it is useful to start on an SSRI. This may happen if your depression is severe, or other treatments haven't worked, or are not available in your area. Your doctor will provide you with information about the medicine and its possible side-effects
- When taking SSRIs, it is important to avoid using some other types of medicines, including some over the counter and herbal medicines, alcohol or other drugs. You can ask your doctor or pharmacist for information on which things you should avoid
- If you start on an SSRI your doctor will need to see you at least every week until the depression starts to improve. It's important not to miss your appointments