



Fast Facts: Antidepressant Medication Side Effects

Antidepressants

Antidepressants may cause mild and usually temporary side effects (sometimes referred to as adverse side effects) in some people. Typically these are annoying, but not serious. However, any unusual reactions or side effects or those that interfere with functioning should be reported to the doctor immediately. The most common side effects of tricyclic antidepressants and ways to deal with them are:

- **Bladder problems:** emptying the bladder may be troublesome, and the urine stream may not be as strong as usual; the doctor should be notified if there is marked difficulty or pain
- **Blurred vision:** this will pass soon and will not usually necessitate new glasses
- **Constipation:** bran cereals, prunes, fruit, and vegetables should be in the diet
- **Dizziness:** rising from the bed or chair slowly is helpful
- **Drowsiness as a daytime problem:** this usually passes soon. A person feeling drowsy or sedated should not drive or operate heavy equipment. The more sedating antidepressants are generally taken at bedtime to help sleep and minimize daytime drowsiness.
- **Dry mouth:** it is helpful to drink sips of water; chew sugarless gum; clean teeth daily
- **Sexual problems:** sexual functioning may change; if worrisome, it should be discussed with the doctor

The newer antidepressants have different types of side effects.

- **Agitation (feeling jittery):** if this happens for the first time after the drug is taken and is more than transient, the doctor should be notified
- **Headache:** this will usually go away
- **Nausea:** this is also temporary, but even when it occurs, it is transient after each dose
- **Nervousness and insomnia (trouble falling asleep or waking often during the night):** these may occur during the first few weeks; dosage reductions or time will usually resolve them