

# DEPRESSION & ANTIDEPRESSANTS

We all have days when we feel sad. But generally those feelings go away and we feel happy again. Depression is more than just feeling sad. It is a medical illness that can affect your ability to work, sleep, eat and enjoy life. It's estimated that almost 50% of people who are depressed do not get medical treatment. But depression can be treated—and you can feel better again.

How can you tell if you're depressed? The signs and symptoms of depression vary from person to person. But if you've felt five or more of the following symptoms, particularly for more than two weeks, you should see your doctor.

- *Persistent sad, anxious, or empty feeling*
- *Feeling hopeless or pessimistic*
- *Feeling worthless or guilty*
- *Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed*
- *Lack of energy, fatigue*
- *Difficulty concentrating, making decisions, remembering*
- *Insomnia, early-morning awakening, oversleeping*
- *Appetite and/or weight loss or gain*
- *Irritability or restlessness*
- *Persistent headaches, digestive disorders, chronic pain*
- *Thoughts of suicide or death*
- *Feeling emotionally numb*
- *Change in work style—missing deadlines, not finishing tasks, calling in sick*

There are many medications used to treat depression. The newer drugs introduced in the last ten years have fewer side effects. Known as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), these drugs work by increasing the levels of serotonin, a chemical in the brain that effects moods and emotions. SSRIs are usually the first drugs prescribed for depression. SSRIs include Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft, Lexapro and Celexa.

With the growing number of new drugs, it's more difficult to decide which medication best fits an individual's needs. And, with a wide variation in the cost of drugs used to treat the same medical problem, such as depression, it's hard to judge whether a higher priced drug is better or not.

## *Ask Your Health Care Practitioner During Your Next Visit*

- Am I taking the most effective drug for my condition?*
- Are alternative drugs available that are equally effective?*
- Are alternative drugs available that are effective, but less costly?*
- Is there a generic available for my brand name drug?*
- Will this drug interact with other medication I take?*

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## The Most Effective Drugs At the Best Price

If you and your doctor decide that taking an anti-depressant is the best choice, you still need to decide which one to take. Ask your doctor if a generic medicine is right for you. It's also important to take the medication as prescribed. It may take six to eight weeks to see the full benefits. Side effects may occur initially, but these are generally mild and go away. If the side effects are bothersome, you should talk to your doctor.

### Antidepressant Drugs

<u>Brand Name</u>	<u>Generic Name</u>	<u>Generic Available</u>	<u>Average Price for 30-day Supply</u>
Wellbutrin	Bupropion	Yes	\$200 Brand/\$70 Generic
Wellbutrin SR	Bupropion SR	Yes	\$162 Brand/\$96 Generic
Wellbutrin XL		No	\$114
Celexa	Citalopram	Yes	\$89 Brand/\$42 Generic
Cymbalta		No	\$117
Lexapro		No	\$75
Prozac	Fluoxetine	Yes	\$140 Brand/\$25 Generic
Remeron	Mirtazapine	Yes	\$122 Brand/\$64 Generic
Paxil	Paroxetine	Yes	\$98 Brand/\$58 Generic
Paxil CR		No	\$98
Zoloft		No	\$89
Effexor		No	\$139
Effexor ER		No	\$115

Not all drugs are available as a generic. Many drugs are patent protected and sold only as a brand name. The generic antidepressants are just as effective as widely-advertised brand name antidepressants. At this time only bupropion, citalopram, fluoxetine, mirtazapine, and paroxetine are available generically. If your prescription is not available generically, ask if an alternative generic drug may be appropriate for you.

Rising costs of drugs concern all of us. High prices affect you whether paying cash, paying with private insurance or paying taxes for health services. Knowing the most effective and least costly drugs can cut costs. There may be less expensive alternatives to the drug you are taking. We encourage you to talk with your physician about which, if any, drug is best for you. Keep in mind that it is always up to the physician to determine the appropriate drug,