

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)

(Citalopram-Celexa[®], Escitalopram-Ciprallex[®], Fluoxetine-Prozac[®], Fluvoxamine-Luvox[®], Paroxetine-Paxil[®], Sertraline-Zoloft[®])

PURPOSE

The SSRIs are a class of antidepressants that are used to treat depression as well as some anxiety disorders, such as obsessive compulsive disorder. They are grouped together because they all selectively work through serotonin to alleviate depressive and anxiety symptoms. Depression is a disorder which goes beyond feelings of “sadness” or “feeling down”. Some symptoms of depression include low mood, feelings of guilt, hopelessness and worthlessness, significant unintentional weight change, loss of interest, sleep and eating disturbances, low sex drive, poor concentration, and even suicidal thoughts. Although the underlying biochemical cause of depression is poorly understood, at least part of the problem is due to imbalances of neurotransmitters or “messengers” in the brain. SSRIs work to restore the balance of certain neurotransmitters. They may sometimes be used as a “helper”

medication with other antidepressants to optimize therapy.

BENEFITS FROM SSRIs

The symptoms which SSRIs have been found to help with include:

- Depressed or low mood, fatigue, low energy
- Isolation, lack of interest
- Suicidal thoughts
- Loss of appetite and unintentional weight loss

Other Benefits

- Improved sleep
- Reduced irritability and increased calmness
- Improved ability to concentrate on activities
- Decrease in intrusive thoughts and irrational repetitive behaviors

STREET DRUGS OR ALCOHOL WILL DECREASE THE BENEFITS OF SSRIs AND INCREASE CHANCES OF HAVING TO BE IN HOSPITAL

BE PATIENT – it takes a while

SSRIs will start to help after the first week but may take 4-6 weeks to work. Take this medication ONLY as prescribed by your doctor. DO NOT take more of it, or use it more often than recommended.

DO NOT stop this medication suddenly without consulting your doctor. If you forget to take a dose, you should take it as soon as possible. If it is close to the time of your next dose, you should skip the missed dose and continue with your regular schedule. DO NOT take two doses at once.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS OF SSRIs

- Nausea
- Dry mouth (fluvoxamine, paroxetine, Sertraline)
- Insomnia (Fluoxetine, Sertraline)
- Sleepiness (citalopram, escitalopram, fluvoxamine, paroxetine)
- Decreased interest in sex, problems with ejaculation or attaining orgasm
- Lack of appetite
- Agitation/nervousness
- Increased sweating
- Tremor
- Constipation (fluvoxamine, paroxetine)
- Diarrhea (paroxetine, Sertraline)

Some of these side effects disappear with treatment, while others may not. You may experience other side effects not listed here. Please check with your

doctor, nurse or pharmacist if any side effects become bothersome.

Inform your doctor as soon as possible if you develop:

- Dizziness or fainting
- Inability to coordinate or jerking movements or severe tremors

PRECAUTIONS

- Always inform your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or dentist about your medication before any treatment
- Since SSRIs can interact with other medications, always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking any prescription, over-the-counter medications and herbal remedies
- Some of the SSRIs may cause drowsiness. You should know how you react to the medication before you drive, use hazardous machinery or perform other tasks that require alertness
- Tell you doctor is you are pregnant or breast-feeding before you take this medication.

STORAGE OF MEDICATION

Store away from heat and direct light. Avoid storing in the bathroom as the heat or moisture may cause the medication to break down.

KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN

RIVERVIEW HOSPITAL
PHARMACY

Approved by the Pharmacy &
Therapeutics Committee
in 2007

**PATIENT
INFORMATION

ON

SELECTIVE
SEROTONIN
REUPTAKE
INHIBITORS
(SSRIs)**



BC Mental Health &
Addiction Services

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority