



Medications to manage anxiety

Doctors sometimes prescribe medicine to treat anxiety. (Anxiety is severe worry or fear.) The medicine your doctor may give you for anxiety depends on several things. These include your symptoms. And how severe they are. Your doctor will also want to know how you have done with treatments in the past. Your health history is important for the doctor to know too. He or she will review treatment options with you. Together you'll create a treatment plan that is best for your needs.

Medicines often used for treating anxiety

Three types of medicines are most often used to help with anxiety.

- **Anti-anxiety medicines.** These typically work quickly to combat anxiety. Some people may need higher doses over time to get the same effect. So, anti-anxiety medicines are usually given only for a short time. Physical side effects can include feeling drowsy or dizzy. They can also slow reaction times.
- **Antidepressant medicines.** These also relieve symptoms of anxiety. The drugs help brain cells communicate better with one another. Antidepressants can have physical side effects. But they are usually mild. They often go away as you continue to take the medicine. Common side effects include upset stomach, headache, and having jitters. It can take several weeks for antidepressants to work well.
- **Beta blockers.** These drugs are often used to treat heart conditions. Some of these drugs have been found to help ease the symptoms of anxiety. This can include sweating, trembling and nausea.

Here are some important things to know about anxiety medicines:

- Medicines do not cure anxiety. They can help reduce the symptoms. This allows you to think more clearly. It helps you cope better with the illness. Therapy (counseling) can help you develop more lasting results.
- Doctors use several types of medicines to help with anxiety. There is no way to know which medicine will work best. You may have to try different medicines to get the best results.

Before starting medicine

You'll need to meet with your doctor to discuss whether to use medicine to treat your anxiety. Your doctor will need to know the following:

- Any allergies you have to medicines.
- All medicines you are currently taking.
- Which medicine(s) worked well for you in the past.
- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding.

This is important to your doctor. It will help him or her decide which medicine to prescribe for you.

Questions to ask

You should ask your doctor about the medicine(s) you are given. Here are some questions to ask.

- How does the medicine work? How can it help me?
- Does the drug come in a generic (non-brand-name) form?
- How and when do I take the medicine?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- What side effects might I feel?
- How long will I need to take the medicine?
- What do I need to do as I'm stopping the medicine?

Cautions when taking medicine

- Medicine works best when taken just as your doctor tells you. He or she will give you instructions. If you need more medicine to get the same effect, talk to your doctor right away.
- Don't stop taking your medicine without talking to your doctor first. You and your doctor may decide to stop your medicine. If so, your doctor may tell you to slowly reduce the amount you take. It can be harmful to stop taking medicine all at once. You need to do what your doctor tells you to avoid problems.

Making the best use of medicines

- Check with your doctor often during the first three months of treatment. You'll talk about side effects. You'll discuss your progress. Your doctor will answer your questions. Monthly or more frequent doctor visits may help you. Talk to your doctor about how often you should come in.
- You may have problems remembering to take your medicine. It helps to try taking it at the same time you do other routine activities. This could be when you brush your teeth. Or eat breakfast. You can also try using a seven-day pill box. Or, write notes to yourself.
- Keep a written log. Write down which of your symptoms have improved. Write down the symptoms that have not. Note if you have any side effects. Take the log with you when you visit your doctor.

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