



# SSRI Medications

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors, or SSRIs are effective medications for the treatment of anxiety disorders in children and adolescents and for the treatment of depression in adolescents. SSRIs may be most effective when a person taking the medication is also participating in therapy for their anxiety or depression.

## How do they work?

SSRIs work with serotonin and other naturally-occurring chemicals in the brain that control mood and anxiety.

SSRIs are not addictive medications.

## How long will it take?

It can take up to 6 weeks for an SSRI to take full effect, but most people notice some improvement in 2 to 4 weeks.

Your child must take the medication every day for it to be effective, even after symptoms have gotten better.

Your child will start on a low dose of the SSRI. The dose will likely need to be increased to reach a dose that improves your child's symptoms.

Talk with your child's doctor before stopping or changing the dose of the medication.

Your child's doctor may recommend treatment for at least 9 to 12 months once symptoms have improved. At that point, they may recommend gradually decreasing the medication. If symptoms come back after your child stops the medication, your child's doctor may recommend longer term treatment.



Scan the codes for additional information.

## What are side effects of SSRIs?

**Common side effects** include stomachache, headache, feeling jittery, or feeling tired. These are usually mild and go away after a few weeks. Taking the medication with food or changing the time of the dose may reduce these side effects.

**Less common side effects** include increased sweating, dry mouth, easy bruising, and vivid dreams.

**Rare, but serious side effects:** Call your child's doctor right away if your child has behavioral changes including

- becoming impulsive (such as trying risky behaviors) or hyperactive.
- becoming uncharacteristically happy or irritable.
- showing signs of self-harm (hurting oneself).
- talking about or giving any indication they are thinking about suicide.

## Does my child have to take medication?

It is up to you whether your child takes medication for anxiety or depression. Your child's doctor will give you information to help make a decision.

The goal of treatment is to eliminate symptoms of anxiety or depression and get your child feeling well and healthy.