

# Do I still need my antidepressant?

## ARE YOU:



Taking an antidepressant for a long time.



Noticing unwanted side effects, even from medicines you have been taking for a long time.



Taking many medicines at the same time.

If any of the above describes you, here are some questions to ask your health professional about your antidepressant medicine.

## 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTH PROFESSIONAL

### 1 Does it still help you?

- Antidepressant medicines are not always life-long medicines. Some people only need to take them for 6-12 months once they are back to feeling well. It is OK to ask your health professional about making a plan to come off them.
- Your doctor can help you decide if and when to stop.

### 2 What happens if I just keep taking it?

- Knowing the possible benefits and risks if you continue can help you decide.
- Get trusted information about benefits and risks from your health professional.

### 3 Are there other ways to help manage my anxiety or depression?

- There are many ways to help with anxiety or depression other than taking medicines. These include psychological therapies, physical activity, becoming or remaining socially connected with others, and improving sleep.
- Talk about things you already do that help your well-being and mental health. This may give you and your health professional more ideas.

### 4 Is it safe for me to stop?

- Stopping a medicine that has been helpful can cause worry. However, for most people, depression and anxiety are not life-long conditions, so they do not need life-long treatment.
- Your doctor can guide you on when and how to stop safely.

Don't stop on your own because it could make you feel worse.

### 5 What will happen if I stop or change my dose on my own?

- Lowering your dose or stopping without support from your health professionals may lead to withdrawal symptoms. Always follow a plan created with your health care team.

Write down other questions you want to ask, or have someone else write them for you

## I WANT TO STOP MY ANTIDEPRESSANT. WHAT'S NEXT?

### Make a plan with your doctor, pharmacist or other health professional.

- Work out clear steps for how to start lowering your antidepressant dose. This is something your doctor will advise on.
- Your medicine dose will be reduced slowly. This is called tapering and usually takes many weeks or months. Sometimes it can take years.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download more resources to support your conversations about stopping or reducing your antidepressant

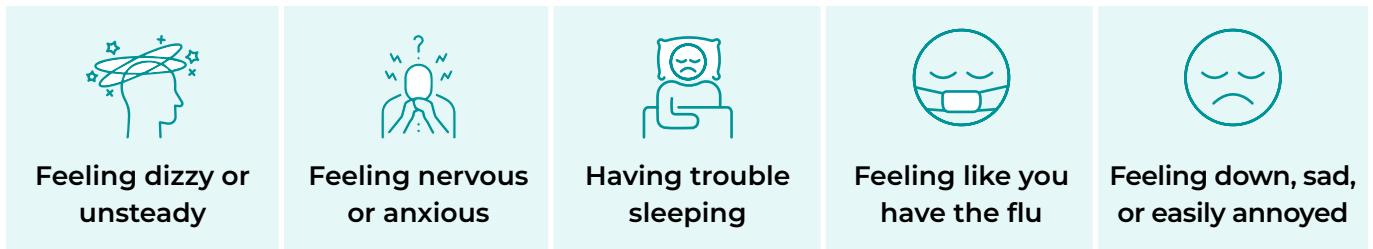


## WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

### Keep a check on how you are feeling

While you lower the amount of antidepressant you are taking, you may need to see your doctor more often. This is so they can check how you are going with the changes and talk about any new problems you may have. Between visits, it might help to write down how you are feeling as the dose changes.

Common symptoms you might notice:



These are not the only changes you might have. Make sure to tell your health professional about any new symptoms that are causing you worry.

### Keep a check on other health conditions

It is a good idea to check how your physical health is going as you lower your antidepressant dose. Make sure to let your health professional know if another health condition gets worse or gets better while you are tapering your antidepressant.

### When should I get help?

It can be worrying when your medicines are changed. Ask your doctor about any symptoms to be aware of that need urgent care and where to go for help.

**For immediate help in an emergency, call 000. National 24/7 crisis services: Lifeline 13 11 14, Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467, beyondblue 1300 224 636.**

### Medical words used in this document:

**Antidepressant:** prescription medicine that can help some people with anxiety or depression feel better.

**Anxiety:** a feeling of worry, fear or unease that doesn't go away and affects daily life.

**Depression:** feelings of sadness or tiredness that do not go away and can stop you from doing things you usually enjoy.

**Deprescribing:** stopping a prescribed medicine.

**Side effects:** unwanted effects from taking medicine, like feeling dizzy or having an upset stomach.

**Tapering:** reducing how much of a medicine you are taking.

Quality Use of Medicines Alliance

