

Side effects of antidepressant medications

Drug	Anticholinergic	Drowsiness	Insomnia/agitation	Orthostatic hypotension	QTc prolongation*	Gastrointestinal toxicity	Weight gain	Sexual dysfunction
Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) *								
Citalopram	0	0	1+	1+	1+ ^Δ	1+ (all SSRIs: see*)	1+	3+
Escitalopram	0	0	1+	1+	1+	1+	1+	3+
Fluoxetine	0	0	2+	1+	1+	1+	1+	3+
Fluvoxamine	0	1+	1+	1+	0 to 1+	1+	1+	3+
Paroxetine	1+	1+	1+	2+	0 to 1+	1+	2+	4+
Sertraline	0	0	2+	1+	0 to 1+	2+ [◇]	1+	3+
Atypical agents								
Agomelatine [§] (not available in United States)	0	1+	1+	0	0	1+	0	0 to 1+
Bupropion	0	0	2+ (immediate release) 1+ (sustained release)	0	1+	1+	0	0
Mirtazapine	1+	4+	0	0	1+	0	4+	1+
Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) *								
Desvenlafaxine [¥]	0	1+	2+	0	0	2+ (initially)* 1+ (after 1 week)	0	3+
Duloxetine	0	0	2+	0	0	2+*	0	3+
Milnacipran [¥]	1+	1+	0	0	0	2+*	0	0
Venlafaxine [¥]	0	1+	2+	0	1+	2+ (immediate release)* 1+ (extended release)*	0	3+
Serotonin modulators								
Trazodone	0	4+	0	1+ (hypnotic dose) 3+ (antidepressant dose)	1+ (hypnotic dose) 2+ (antidepressant dose)	1+ (hypnotic dose) 3+ (antidepressant dose)	0 (hypnotic dose) 1+ (antidepressant dose)	1+ [‡]
Vilazodone	0	0	2+	0	0	4+ [†]	0	2+
Nefazodone**	1+	2+	0	1+	0	2+	0	0
Tricyclic and tetracyclic antidepressants (TCAs) **								
Amitriptyline	4+	4+	0	3+	3+	1+ (all TCAs see**)	4+	3 to 4+
Amoxapine	2+	2+	2+	2+	2+	0	2+	ND
Clomipramine	4+	4+	1+	2+	2+	1+	4+	4+
Desipramine	1+	4+	1+	2+	3+	0	1+	ND
Doxepin	3+	3+	0	2+	3+	0	4+	3+
Imipramine	3+	3+	1+	4+	3+	1+	4+	3+
Maprotiline	2+	3+	0	2+	3+	0	2+	ND
Nortriptyline	2+	2+	0	1+	3+	0	1+	ND
Protriptyline	2+	1+	1+	2+	3+	1+	1+	3 to 4+
Trimipramine	4+	4+	1+	3+	1+	0	4+	ND
Monoamine oxidase inhibitors								
Isocarboxazid	1+	1+	2+	2+	0	1+	1+	4+
Phenelzine	1+	2+	1+	3+	0	1+	2+	4+
Selegiline	1+	0	1+	1+	0	0	0	0
Tranylcypromine	1+	1+	2+	2+	0	1+	1+	4+

Scale: 0 = none; 1+ = slight; 2+ = low; 3+ = moderate; 4+ = high; ND = inadequate data.

* Risk of QTc prolongation or torsades de pointes is also elevated with advanced age, female sex, heart disease, congenital long QT syndrome, hypokalemia or hypomagnesemia, elevated serum drug concentrations (eg, drug overdose, interacting drugs, organ failure) and combination of drugs with QTc prolonging effects. Refer to topic on acquired long QT syndrome.

• All SSRIs and SNRIs are associated with transient nausea and gastrointestinal discomfort upon initiation or dose increase.

Δ Based upon reports of dose related QTc prolongation and arrhythmia, the maximum recommended dose of citalopram is 20 mg for patients at increased risk of elevated citalopram serum concentrations.

◇ Sertraline is associated with higher rates of diarrhea.

§ Agomelatine may be hepatotoxic and is contraindicated with any degree of liver impairment. Transaminase monitoring is required.

¥ May cause persistent dose-related increases in blood pressure (primarily diastolic) and heart rate. Monitor blood pressure regularly.

‡ Trazodone is associated rarely with priapism, which is considered a medical emergency. Refer to UpToDate topic on Serotonin modulators.

† Vilazodone is associated with higher rates of nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

** Caution: can cause liver failure. Not available in Europe, Canada, and several other countries.

•• Gastrointestinal forms of anticholinergic side effects include: dry mouth, constipation, epigastric distress, decreased esophagogastric tone. Refer to "Anticholinergic" data for frequency rankings.

Created with data from:

1. Nelson JC. Tricyclic and tetracyclic drugs. In: The American Psychiatric Publishing Textbook of Psychopharmacology, 4th ed, Schatzberg AF, Nemeroff CB (Ed), American Psychiatric Publishing, Washington, DC 2009. p.263.
2. Lexicomp Online. Copyright © 1978-2013 Lexicomp, Inc. All Rights Reserved.
3. Wenzel-Seifert K, Wittmann M, Haen E: QTc prolongation by psychotropic drugs and the risk of torsade de pointes. Dtsch Arztebl Int 2011; 108(41):687-93.
4. Serretti A, Chiesa A. Sexual side effects of pharmacological treatment of psychiatric disease. Clin Pharm Ther 2011; 89:142-7.
5. Howland RH. A benefit-risk assessment of agomelatine in the treatment of major depression. Drug Saf 2011; 34:709.