**What are anxiety medications and how do they work?**

Anxiety is a normal and useful response to potentially stressful or dangerous situations. It increases our awareness of what's going on around us. For most people, anxiety is short-lived and normally goes away once the situation has passed. This is not the case for an estimated 40 million adults in the United States who have some type of anxiety disorder and experience ongoing and unwarranted psychological distress. That distress may also manifest itself in physical symptoms such as muscle tension, headaches, or chest pain.

Anxiety medications include multiple types of drugs that are used to treat the symptoms of anxiety disorders. The three most commonly prescribed types of anxiety medication are antidepressants, anti-anxiety medications (also known as anxiolytics), and beta-blockers. Antidepressants and anxiolytic medications work primarily by affecting the balance of certain chemicals in the brain known as neurotransmitters. Beta-blockers and other types of drugs are used to address the physical symptoms that may accompany an anxiety attack. First-generation antihistamines are also used to help with anxiety symptoms because they have a sedating effect.

Anxiety disorders are associated with certain chemical imbalances in the brain involving neurotransmitters such as serotonin, norepinephrine, and gamma aminobutyric acid or GABA. These chemicals are associated with an individual's sense of well-being or with the ability to relax. Anxiety medications can't cure an anxiety disorder, but by altering the level of these chemicals, antidepressants and anti-anxiety drugs help control the psychological symptoms. Beta-blocking drugs work by blocking the receptors that are associated with some of the physiological symptoms of anxiety -- including rapid heartbeat.

**For what conditions are anxiety medications used?**

Anxiety medications are used either alone or in combination with [psychotherapy](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=42208) to treat a number of different disorders all classified as “anxiety disorders.” These include:

* [Generalized anxiety disorder](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=176841) ([GAD](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=23939))
* [Phobias](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=90009)
* [Obsessive-compulsive disorder](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=4610) ([OCD](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=11763))
* [Post-traumatic stress disorder](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=22491) (PTSD)
* [Panic disorder](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=4753) (PD)
* [Social anxiety disorder](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=14501) (SAD)

**Which anxiety medication is used depends on the specific diagnosis:**

* Antidepressants known as selective serotonin [reuptake](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=25240) inhibitors (SSRIs) are used to treat panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety disorder, general anxiety disorder, and [post-traumatic stress disorder](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=18779).
* [Tricyclic antidepressants](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=95236) (TCAs) are used in treating panic disorder, [post-traumatic stress](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=5012) disorder, and general anxiety disorder. One tricyclic, clomipramine ([Anafranil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67090)), may also be used to treat obsessive-compulsive disorder.
* The antidepressants known as monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) are used for panic disorder, social anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic [stress](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=488) disorder.
* Other antidepressants, including the serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), are used for panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, social anxiety disorder, general anxiety disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder.
* Buspirone ([BuSpar](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=66187)), an anti-anxiety drug, is used in the treatment of general anxiety disorder.
* The [benzodiazepines](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=94661) are used to treat general anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and panic disorder.
* First-generation antihistamines, such as diphenhydramine, can be used to treat general anxiety disorder.
* Beta-blockers, such as propranolol, are used to treat performance anxiety, a kind of social anxiety disorder, and are sometimes used for panic disorder.
* Alpha-blockers, such as prazosin, are used in treating post-traumatic stress disorder, specifically for [nightmares](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=37618).
* Other drugs, such as anticonvulsants and antipsychotics are used as augmentation therapy to increase the overall response to therapy when symptoms persist after receiving treatment with first-line anti-anxiety drugs.

**Are there differences among anxiety medications?**

Anxiety medications in the same class work in a similar way and there are similarities between classes of anxiety medications. The SSRIs affect brain serotonin levels. They are first-line for treating most types of anxiety. Other antidepressants, including the tricyclics (TCAs) and the monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), that also act on brain serotonin and norepinephrine levels have more limited use because of their side effects and drug interactions.

The anxiolytic drugs, which specifically target these disorders, work in different ways and have specific treatment applications. Benzodiazepines act on the neurotransmitter gamma aminobutyric acid (GABA). Buspirone (BuSpar) enhances the activity of serotonin. The antihistamine hydroxyzine ([Atarax](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70086), [Vistaril](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=76212)), has a sedative effect by blocking certain receptors in the brain.

Medications normally used to treat [high blood pressure](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=378) also have specific off-label uses for treating panic disorders. The beta-blockers propranolol ([Inderal](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73900)) and [atenolol](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=65501) (Tenormin) have become a popular remedy for performance anxiety, also known as stage fright. They may also have some use in PTSD. The alpha-blocker prazosin ([Minipress](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73648)) eases nightmares from PTSD. Other alpha-blockers, such as clonidine ([Catapres](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67104)) and guanfacine ([Tenex](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=171728)), may also be useful for treating PTSD.

**What are the warnings/precautions/side effects of anti-anxiety medications?**

**Antidepressants**

* All antidepressants may increase the risk of suicide in children, adolescents, and young adults up to the age of 24. Also, using other antidepressants with MAO inhibitors poses the serious risk of developing severe, possibly fatal side effects. A space of 14 days needs to be allowed between the use of the two types of drugs.
* Abrupt withdrawal of selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) may result in anxiety, [confusion](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=63314), dizziness, and agitation.
* Other drugs that interfere with [coagulation](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=18597), including aspirin and other nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications, should be avoided when using SSRIs and SNRIs.
* Combining SSRIs or SNRIs with [tryptophan](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=22835), [migraine](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=4385) drugs known as triptans, and other drugs that increase serotonin levels may lead to a serious, life-threatening reaction.
* Some SSRIs and SNRIs may cause a drop in blood sodium levels, especially in dehydrated patients, the elderly, or those using [diuretics](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=94169).
* If a patient develops a rash while using fluoxetine ([Prozac](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69225)), the medication should be discontinued, as this might indicate a serious allergic or other reaction. Fluoxetine commonly causes insomnia and may cause significant weight loss.
* Duloxetine ([Cymbalta](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67461)) can cause liver damage and should not be used by alcohol abusers or by those with pre-existing [liver disease](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=110443). It may also cause dizziness on standing or even [fainting](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=1945) early in therapy.
* Venlafaxine ([Effexor](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68329)) may significantly increase [cholesterol](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=320) levels. It may also decrease appetite and cause weight loss. Some patients may experience a sustained increase in blood pressure when using venlafaxine. And venlafaxine should be used with caution in patients with [glaucoma](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=373).
* Mirtazapine ([Remeron](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71816)) may rarely cause a serious blood disorder called [agranulocytosis](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=8816). If fever, [sore throat](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=480), or other signs of infection develop while on mirtazapine, and white blood cell counts are elevated, the medication should be discontinued. Mirtazapine may cause an increase in appetite and [weight gain](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=24750). It may also cause drowsiness and/or dizziness. And it can increase cholesterol and triglyceride levels as well as affect liver enzyme levels.
* Some tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) may cause drowsiness. [Anticholinergic](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=2281) side effects commonly occur with TCAs. These include [dry mouth](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=43095), [urinary retention](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=113304), blurry vision, and constipation. TCAs also interact with a wide array of drugs, sometimes with fatal results. Additionally, TCAs are a significant cause of death from drug overdoses.
* Patients with cardiac disease may need to avoid use of tricyclic antidepressants, and TCAs should not be used in the recovery period immediately following a [heart attack](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=379).
* TCAs should be used with caution in patients with glaucoma and history of seizures.
* With monoamine oxidase inhibitors, it's important to monitor blood pressure during therapy. If [palpitations](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=437) or headache occur while MAOIs are being used, treatment should be stopped, as these may be signs of a potentially fatal [hypertensive crisis](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=94926).
* Foods containing tyramine should not be eaten while using MAOIs. Doing so may [trigger](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=30700) a [hypertensive](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=23388) crisis. These would include foods smoked, aged, pickled, or fermented -- or food with natural bacterial contamination. Examples of such foods include beer, wine, [yeast](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6051), liver, dry sausages, fava beans, and [yogurt](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6062).
* MAOIs interact with a wide array of prescription and nonprescription drugs. Patients should make sure doctors and other health care professionals know they are using these medications.
* Patients using MAOIs may experience drowsiness and dizziness; insomnia is also possible. Other side effects of MAOIs include weight gain, sexual dysfunction, constipation, and other [gastrointestinal](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=3555) problems.
* Trazodone ([Desyrel](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75596)) can cause [priapism](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=170639) (sustained, painful erections). It can also cause drowsiness. Food significantly affects absorption of trazodone in some patients. Therefore, trazodone should be taken after a meal or snack.
* Bupropion ([Wellbutrin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=78601)) may increase the risk of seizures, especially at higher doses. It may also cause a significant increase in blood pressure. About one out of every three patients using bupropion experiences insomnia. Bupropion may cause dry mouth.
* Sweating, constipation, and [loss of appetite](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=32101) have been reported with desvenlafaxine. Eye pain, visual changes, and ocular swelling are possible with desvenlafaxine.
* [Erectile dysfunction](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=395), increased heart rate and/or palpitations, sweating, and constipation are common side effects of levomilnacipran.
* The most common side effect with milnacipran is nausea. Taking it with food can minimize the discomfort.
* Atomoxetine may increase suicidal thoughts in [teens](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=2001) and children. Other atomoxetine side effects include dizziness, tiredness, [mood swings](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=179592), nausea, vomiting, [decreased appetite](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=109712), trouble urinating, and sexual side effects.
* Nefazodone may increase suicidal thoughts in children and young adults.

**Anxiolytics (Anti-Anxiety Medications)**

* Benzodiazepines should not be abruptly stopped because of the risk of seizures and other serious side effects. It is dangerous to combine benzodiazepines with other [central nervous system](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=2667) depressants, including alcohol. Doing so may cause profound drowsiness and/or impair breathing. Those who have breathing difficulties such as [sleep apnea](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=1982) or [chronic obstructive pulmonary disease](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=178168) ([COPD](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=1976)) should not use benzodiazepines.
* Benzodiazepines frequently cause drowsiness; therefore, care should be taken when operating machinery or motor vehicles.
* Side effects of antihistamines include drowsiness and dry mouth.

**Anticonvulsants**

* The [anticonvulsant](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=20523) divalproex ([Depakote](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68049)) may cause life-threatening liver and pancreatic toxicities; it is also associated with causing [birth defects](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=2007). Divalproex may interfere with blood coagulation. [Lethargy](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=4138) is a common side effect of divalproex, but if it's accompanied by [vomiting](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=101642) and confusion it may indicate a more serious problem called hyperammonemia in which blood [ammonia](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=25654) levels become elevated.
* Tiagabine ([Gabitril](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69470)) at certain dosage levels, or with increases in dose, may induce seizures even in those who have never had them. It may also cause problems with concentration, drowsiness, and dizziness.
* Anticonvulsant medications should not be withdrawn suddenly because of the risk of seizures.
* In pediatric patients, the anticonvulsant gabapentin ([Neurontin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69463)) may cause behavioral problems, including restlessness, agitation, and hostility. Gabapentin may cause drowsiness.
* Lamotrigine ([Lamictal](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70674)) has caused life-threatening and disfiguring rashes. At the first sign of rash, the medication should be discontinued. There is no guarantee though, the rash won't continue to progress once the drug is withdrawn. Coagulation problems and other blood-related issues may also occur with this drug. It may increase suicidal thoughts or behaviors. It may cause dizziness and drowsiness.
* Use of the anticonvulsant topiramate ([Topamax](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75505)) may cause metabolic [acidosis](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6846). Symptoms include fatigue and [anorexia](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=276). Patients using topiramate should have blood [bicarbonate](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=11038) levels monitored.
* Topiramate can cause visual changes, including decreased acuity along with [eye pain](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=26384). This may necessitate withdrawal of the drug to prevent permanent visual loss. Decreased sweating and the resultant increase in body temperature, sometimes severe enough to require hospitalization, may occur with topiramate. Patients should be monitored for [sweat](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=9298) output, especially in hot weather. Side effects of topiramate include [difficulty concentrating](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=122407), behavioral changes, and drowsiness.
* Levetiracetam may cause mood swings, [hallucinations](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=179302), and unusual behaviors -- as well as fatigue, weakness, and problems [walking](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=81245) or moving.
* Pregabalin commonly cause dizziness as well as sleepiness. It may also cause life-threatening allergic reactions.
* Vigabatrin is under a restricted-use program primarily because it can cause [vision loss](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=115584) in anyone who takes it, at any dose. Visual loss commonly includes loss of [peripheral vision](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=10638). Vigabatrin has also been linked to suicidal thoughts.

**Beta-Blockers**

* Beta-blockers should not be withdrawn suddenly because severe cardiac problems, including heart attacks, may occur. Beta-blockers also should not be used in patients with certain breathing disorders, including [bronchitis](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=53242) and [emphysema](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=88081).
* Beta-blockers can mask signs and symptoms of [hypoglycemia](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=392) and overactive [thyroid](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=19509) disease. Dizziness and drowsiness can occur with beta-blockers.

**Alpha-Blockers**

* The alpha-blocker prazosin (Minipress) can cause dizziness and [lightheadedness](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6109), both common side effects. Early in treatment, fainting can occur, especially when standing up.
* The alpha-blockers clonidine (Catapres) and guanfacine (Tenex) may cause dry mouth, drowsiness, dizziness, constipation, sedation, and [weakness](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=64119).

**Antipsychotics**

* An increased risk of death is seen in elderly patients with [dementia](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=9090)-related [psychosis](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=5110) who use [antipsychotic](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=11993) drugs. These drugs may also increase the risk of suicidal thinking and behavior in younger patients.
* Movement disorders may develop during the use of antipsychotics. Especially with prolonged use, [tardive dyskinesia](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=24146) may become irreversible. Antipsychotics may cause hypoglycemia, which can be life-threatening.
* [Neuroleptic](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=10983) [malignant](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=4260) syndrome, characterized by high fever, [muscular](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=4468) rigidity, and abnormal cardiac symptoms, may occur with antipsychotics.
* Drowsiness is a common side effect of antipsychotics. They may also cause difficulty swallowing. Antipsychotics may interfere with the body's ability to control core temperature, therefore, [exercise](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=56640) caution in situations that raise body temperature (strenuous exercise, hot weather).
* The antipsychotic ziprasidone ([Geodon](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=76527)) prolongs the QT interval, which could lead to fatal heart arrhythmias in some patients. Ziprasidone should not be given to those with a history of QT prolongation or to those who may be taking other drugs that prolong the QT interval.
* The antipsychotic risperidone ([Risperdal](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=74391)) may increase the risk of [cerebrovascular](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=40115) events, such as [stroke](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=489), in elderly patients with dementia-related psychosis.
* Patients taking the antipsychotic quetiapine ([Seroquel](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=74005)) should be examined for [cataracts](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=314) and other changes to the eyes. This drug may also cause dizziness, fainting, and drowsiness.
* The antipsychotic olanzapine ([Zyprexa](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=72722)) may elevate triglyceride levels and cause weight gain. Common side effects include drowsiness, dry mouth, and dizziness.

**What are some examples of anxiety medications?**

**Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors**

* Citalopram (Celexa)
* Escitalopram ([Lexapro](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70856))
* Fluvoxamine (Luvox)
* Paroxetine (Paxil)
* Fluoxetine (Prozac)
* Sertraline (Zoloft)
* Vilazodone ([Viibryd](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=150101))
* Vortioxetine (formerly [Brintellix](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=174466); now Trintellix)

**Tetracyclic Antidepressants**

* Maprotiline (Ludiomil)
* Mianserin (Norval)

**Tricyclic Antidepressants**

* Amitryptiline ([Elavil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=65109))
* [Amoxapine](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=65165) (Asendin)
* Clomipramine (Anafranil) )
* Despiramine ([Norpramin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67706))
* Doxepin (Adapin, [Sinequan](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68161))
* Imipramine ([Tofranil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70163))
* Nortriptyline (Aventyl, [Pamelor](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73024))
* Protryptiline (Vivactyl)
* Trimipramine ([Surmontil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75708))

**Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors**

* Isocarboxazid ([Marplan](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70359))
* Phenelzine ([Nardil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73340))
* Selegiline ([Emsam](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68413) Patches)
* Tranylcypromine ([Parnate](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75568))

**Serotonin Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors**

* Desvenlafaxine ([Pristiq](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=93181))
* Duloxetine (Cymbalta)
* Levomilnacipran (Fetizma)
* Milnacipran ([Savella](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=98133))
* Mirtazapine (Remeron)
* Venlafaxine (Effexor)

**Other Antidepressants**

* Atomoxetine ([Strattera](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=74867))
* Bupropion (Wellbutrin)
* Nefazodone (Serzone)
* Trazodone (Desyrel)

**Anxiolytics: Benzodiazepines**

* Alprazolam (Xanax)
* Chlordiazepoxide ([Librium](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=66754))
* Clobazepam ([Onfi](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=150980))
* Clonazepam (Klonopin)
* Clorazepate ([Tranxene](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67132))
* Diazepam ([Valium](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75918))
* Estazolam ([ProSom](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68644))
* Flurazepam ([Dalmane](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69253))
* Lorazepam (Ativan)
* Midazolam (Versed)
* Oxazepam ([Serax](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=72911))
* Prazepam (Centrax)
* Quazepam ([Doral](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=85421))
* Temazepam ([Restoril](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75134))
* Triazolam (Halcion)

**Anxiolytics: Antihistamines**

* Hydroxyzine (Atarax, Vistaril)

**Non-Benzodiazepines**

* Eszopiclone ([Lunesta](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71116))
* Zaleplon ([Sonata](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=76408))
* Zolpidem ([Ambien](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=76576))
* Zopiclone (Imovane)

**Anxiolytics: Others**

* Buspirone (BuSpar)

**Anticonvulsants**

* Carbamazepine ([Tegretol](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=78531))
* Gabapentin (Neurontin)
* Leveteriacetam ([Keppra](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70534))
* Lamotrigine (Lamictal)
* Pregabalin ([Lyrica](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71165))
* Tiagabine (Gabitril)
* Topiramate (Topamax)
* Valproic Acid (Depakote)
* Vigabatrin ([Sabril](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=105352))

**Beta-Blockers**

* Propranolol (Inderal)
* Atenolol (Tenormin)
* Note: There are many other beta-blockers, but the two above are indicated for social anxiety.

**Alpha-Blockers**

* Prazosin (Minipress)
* Clonidine (Catapres)
* Guanfacine (Tenex)

**Antipsychotics**

* Aripiprazole (Abilify)
* Olanzapine (Zyprexa)
* Quetiapine (Seroquel)
* Risperidone (Risperdal)
* Ziprasidone (Geodon)

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Anxiety Disorders Association of America

**What is depression?**

Occasional feelings of sadness or depression are experienced by most people at some point in life. Feeling sad is a normal human response to difficult situations such as loss of a loved one, financial troubles, or problems at home. These feeling usually last for a few days. However, when these feelings turn into intense sadness, or a person feels helpless, worthless, and hopeless, and last for weeks or longer, it could be due to clinical depression. Depression is a common but serious [mental illness](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=42992) that affects millions of Americans. The symptoms of depression interfere with daily life and cause significant pain to the patient and their loved ones. Although with proper treatment even severe symptoms of depression can get better, many people never seek treatment due to the societal stigma associated with mental illnesses.

Common symptoms of depression include the following:

* Sadness, unhappiness
* Loss of interest in enjoyable activities
* Anger, frustration, irritability
* Sleep changes (too much or too little)
* Feelings of worthlessness
* Thoughts of death or suicide; suicidal attempts
* Weight loss or [weight gain](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=24750)

**What are the classes of available antidepressants?**

* Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
* Serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
* [Tricyclic antidepressants](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=95236) (TCAs)
* Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)
* Atypical agents
* **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)**
* **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)** are the most commonly prescribed [antidepressants](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=88888). They are highly effective and generally cause fewer side effects than the other antidepressants. SSRIs help to alleviate symptoms of depression by blocking the reabsorption or reuptake of serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is a naturally occurring neurotransmitter (chemical) that is used by brain cells to communicate. As SSRIs mainly affect the levels of serotonin and not levels of other neurotransmitters, they are referred to as “selective.”
* Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) include
* citalopram ([Celexa](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=66936)),
* escitalopram ([Lexapro](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70856)),
* fluoxetine ([Prozac](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69225)),
* fluvoxamine ([Luvox](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69316)),
* fluvoxamine CR ([Luvox CR](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=99424)),
* paroxetine ([Paxil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73094)),
* paroxetine CR (Paxil CR),
* sertraline ([Zoloft](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=74622)).

**Selective norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)**

* **Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)** work by blocking the reabsorption of the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine in the brain. They may also have an effect on other neurotransmitters.
* Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs) include
* desvenlafaxine ([Pristiq](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=93181)),
* duloxetine ([Cymbalta](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67461)),
* venlafaxine ([Effexor](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68329)),
* venlafaxine XR ([Effexor XR](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75995)),
* milnacipran ([Savella](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=98133)),
* and levomilnacipran ([Fetzima](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=172408)).

**Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCAs)**

**Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)** were one of the first approved antidepressants. Although they are effective, they have been replaced by newer antidepressants that generally cause fewer side effects. Like SNRIs, TCAs work by blocking the reabsorption of the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine in the brain. Additionally, they block muscarinic M1, histamine H1, and alpha-adrenergic receptors.

Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs) include

* amitriptyline ([Elavil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=65109)),
* desipramine ([Norpramin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67706)),
* doxepine ([Sinequan](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68161)),
* Imipramine ([Tofranil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70163)),
* nortriptyline ([Pamelor](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73024)),
* [amoxapine](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=65165),
* clomipramine ([Anafranil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67090)),
* maprotiline (Ludiomil),
* trimipramine ([Surmontil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75708)),
* and protriptyline ([Vivactil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=104853)).

**Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)**

**Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs)** block the activity of monoamine oxidase, an enzyme that breaks down norepinephrine, serotonin, and [dopamine](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68098) in the brain and other parts of the body. MAOIs have many drug and food interactions and cause significant side effects in comparison to the new antidepressants. As such, MAOIs have been replaced by newer antidepressants that are safer and cause fewer side effects.

Monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs) include:

* phenelzine ([Nardil](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73340)),
* selegiline ([Emsam](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68413)),
* and tranylcypromine ([Parnate](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75568)).

**Atypical antidepressants**

**Atypical antidepressants** are considered “atypical” because these agents do not fit into any of the other classes of antidepressants. Each medicine in this category has a unique mechanism of action in the body. However, like other antidepressants, atypical antidepressants affect the levels of dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine in the brain. [Brintellix](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=174466) and [Viibryd](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=150101) inhibit reuptakeof serotonin but also act on serotonin receptors.

Atypical antidepressants include:

* bupropion ([Wellbutrin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=78601)),
* mirtazapine ([Remeron](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71816)),
* nefazodone ([Serzone](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=72231)),
* trazodone ([Desyrel](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75596), [Oleptro](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=113694)),
* vilazodone (Viibryd),
* and vortioxetine (Brintellix).

**What is a seizure?**

A [seizure](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=472) occurs when there is abnormal electrical activity in the brain. Seizures are also known as convulsions – but not all seizures produce convulsive behavior – that is uncontrollable muscle contractions. Absence seizures, for example, involve brief periods of staring. With atonic seizures, there is a loss of muscular tone or strength. The symptoms produced by a seizure are dependent on which part of the brain is experiencing the abnormal electrical activity. Seizures are generally short-lived – from 15 seconds to 15 minutes – however; there is a life-threatening type of seizure, status epilepticus, in which the seizure does not stop.

**What causes seizures?**

A variety of conditions and substances can trigger seizures. Common causes include congenital abnormalities of the brain, illicit drug use, [fever](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=361), brain tumors and metabolic imbalances, such as high levels of glucose or sodium. Epilepsy is a condition in which a person experiences repeated seizures, due to an overall electrical disturbance in the brain.

**Seizure medications list**

**AMPA Receptor Antagonist**

* Perampanel ([Fycompa](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=164622))

**Calcium Channel Modulators**

* Levetiracetam ([Keppra](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70534), Keppra XL)

**Carbonic Anhydrase Inhibitor**

* [Acetazolamide](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=81802) (Diamox)

**Carboxamides**

* Carbamazepine ([Tegretol](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=78531))
* Eslicarbazepine (Aptiom)
* Oxcarbazepine ([Trileptal](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=72918))
* Rufinamide ([Banzel](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=97295))

**GABA Analogs**

* Gabapentin ([Neurontin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69463))
* Pregabalin ([Lyrica](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71165))
* Progabide (Gabrene)
* Vigabatrin ([Sabril](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=105352))

**GABA Reuptake Inhibitors**

* Tiagabine ([Gabitril](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=69470))

**K-Channel Opener**

* + Ezogabine/Retigabine ([Potiga](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=147437))

**NMDA Receptor Blockers**

* + Felbamate ([Felbatol](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68952))
  + Sodium Channel Modulators
  + Lacosamide ([Vimpat](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=94787))
  + Lamotrigine ([Lamictal](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=70674))
  + Phenytoin ([Dilantin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73389))

**Succinimides**

* + Ethosuximide ([Zarontin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68763))
  + Methsuximide ([Celontin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71543))

**Sulfamate-Substitute Monosaccharides**

* + Topiramate ([Topamax](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75505), Topamax ER, [Qudexy XR](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=177559))

**Sulfonamides**

* + Zonisamide ([Zonegran](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=76597))

**Valproic Acid**

* + Divalproex Sodium ([Depakote](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=68049))
  + Valproic Acid ([Depakene](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67650))

**Barbiturates**

* + [Phenobarbital](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73326)
  + Primidone ([Mysoline](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=73753))

**Benzodiazepines**

* + Clobazam ([Onfi](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=150980))
  + Clonazepam ([Klonopin](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67097), Epitril, Rivotril)
  + Diazepam ([Valium](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=75918), [Diastat](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=67832))
  + Lorazepam ([Ativan](http://www.rxlist.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=71045))