A BIT ABOUT SELECTIVE SEROTONIN REUPTAKE INHIBITORS (SSRIs)

SSRIs are the most frequently prescribed antidepressants and are often also used to treat anxiety.

Depression and anxiety are very complex conditions - they can have many different causes and these causes can differ from person to person. As a result, scientists don’t completely understand the changes in the brain that cause or contribute to these disorders.

However, most scientists agree that serotonin - a neurotransmitter involved in regulating your mood, emotions, sleep and appetite - probably plays a role in depression and anxiety. SSRIs work to increase the level of serotonin in your brain.

SSRIs also have other effects on the brain that occur after you’ve been taking them for several weeks. For example, SSRIs can increase the formation of new neurons and this also seems to be important in reducing depression and anxiety. These delayed effects on the brain may explain why SSRIs can take a few weeks to work properly.

SOME OF THE SIDE EFFECTS

SSRIs can have a number of side effects, including nausea, dizziness, headaches and weakness. SSRIs can also effect sexual function. At first you can feel more anxious than normal and it may take several weeks to start to feel better after commencing treatment with an SSRI. Most importantly – tell your doctor straight away if you feel more depressed or have suicidal thoughts after starting SSRI treatment.

You may also get certain side effects if you stop taking your SSRI suddenly. This is called ‘SSRI-discontinuation syndrome’. If you plan to stop taking your SSRI, it’s a good idea to work out a plan with your GP, prescriber or health professional.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- Citalopram (Cipramil)
- Escitalopram (Lexapro)
- Fluvoxamine (Luvox)
- Fluoxetine (Prozac, Lovan)
- Paroxetine (Aropax)
- Sertraline (Zoloft)
HOW ALCOHOL WORKS

Alcohol is the most commonly used and widely available drug in Australia. It is a depressant, slowing down the messages your brain sends to your body. It can affect people differently depending on your age, size and the amount and type of alcohol consumed.

About 80% of alcohol is absorbed straight into your blood stream. Over time and with heavy consumption, it can have significant impacts on your body including impaired brain function and problems associated with your heart.

If you drink regularly, make sure you speak with your GP about your options and to see if an SSRI is the right drug for you.

1 STANDARD DRINK IS EQUAL TO:

- 100ml of Red Wine
  13.5% Alc. Vol.
- 375ml of Mid Strength Beer
  3.5% Alc. Vol.
- 30ml of Spirit
  40% Alc. Vol.

SOME FUN FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE GOOD</th>
<th>THE BAD</th>
<th>THE REALLY BAD</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol can reduce feelings of stress</td>
<td>Alcohol can increase symptoms of depression</td>
<td>Alcohol can affect your memory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol can improve your mood in the short term</td>
<td>Alcohol is a drug of dependence</td>
<td>Heavy drinking can cause liver problems, including liver disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol can reduce inhibitions</td>
<td>Alcohol can cause nausea and vomiting</td>
<td>Detoxing from alcohol can be life threatening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol can be used in social contexts to enjoy time with friends</td>
<td>Large quantities of alcohol can be toxic</td>
<td>Alcohol is a known carcinogen</td>
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</table>

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU TAKE ALCOHOL AND AN SSRI TOGETHER?

This resource provides general advice regarding some of the potential side effects of using alcohol and taking SSRIs. It is important to note there may be additional or different interactions depending on genetic factors, the amount of alcohol you are consuming or if you have been taking other types of drugs. As these resources provide general advice only, please speak with your GP, prescriber or health professional for more information about potential interactions and impacts.

While it is not recommended that you consume alcohol while you are taking an SSRI, there generally is a low risk of harm from combining the two types of drugs.

Alcohol is a depressant so if you are drinking regularly, make sure you speak with your GP or prescriber about your options and to see if an SSRI is the right drug for you.

The information provided in these fact sheets are a guide only. We recommend speaking with your GP or prescriber about your individual circumstances.