

Is your patient on an SSRI?

- Since the late 1960s, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have played a significant role in treating major depressive disorder (MDD) and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). Prozac, the first SSRI approved and marketed in the United States, hit the market in 1987, and since then, several other SSRIs have been approved by the FDA.
- SSRIs demonstrate effective profiles and are relatively safer compared to other classes of antidepressants. However, studies have revealed a distinct side effect profile that varies in likelihood depending on the SSRI. These adverse effects include:
 - Anticholinergic effects: dry mouth, blurry vision, urinary retention, constipation, dizziness
 - Drowsiness, weight gain, sexual dysfunction, trouble sleeping, jitteriness
 - Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- SSRIs have a US boxed warning for suicidal thoughts and behaviors in pediatric and young adult patients and should be used with extreme caution in this patient population.
- Non-drug approaches to be considered in SSRI-treated patients include psychotherapy and relaxation techniques such as yoga and meditation.
- For your patients, examine risks vs. benefits, as well as question whether they have tried alternative approaches. Keep in mind that when discontinuing SSRIs, tapering recommendations for commonly used SSRIs are as follows:
 - Withdrawal symptoms while discontinuing SSRI may include fatigue, flu-like symptoms, insomnia, vivid dreams, irritability, and GI symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.

SSRI	Tapering regimen
Fluoxetine	Reduce by 5 mg q2wk until dose is 5 mg/d, then 2.5mg/d for 2 wk
Paroxetine	Reduce by 10 mg q2wk until dose is 10 mg/d, then 5mg/d for 2 wk
Sertraline	Reduce by 25 mg q2wk until dose is 25 mg/d, then 12.5 mg/d for 2 wk

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 2. Ferguson JM. SSRI Antidepressant Medications: Adverse Effects and Tolerability. *Prim Care Companion J Clin Psychiatry*. 2001 Feb;3(1):22-27.
 3. Skaehill PA, Welch EB. SSRI Withdrawal Syndrome. *American Society of Consultant Pharmacists, Inc*. 1997. <http://www.ascp.com/public/pubs/tcp/1997/oct/ssri.html>.
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