

Antidepressant Medications: Guidance for People Needing Treatment

Mental Health America Offers Tips After FDA Extends Antidepressant Warning Label

Mental Health America prepared the following tips to help people who take or may need antidepressants better understand and make decisions regarding treatment, after the December, 2006 Food and Drug Administration's Psychopharmacologic Drugs Advisory Committee decision to extend an existing warning label on all antidepressant medications to age 25.

As with any medication, decisions to take antidepressants must be well-informed and their use must be cautiously monitored. Mental Health America offers the following tips on how best to approach this decision.

- Seek help if you feel depressed or experience distress that impacts your daily life.
- Request a full evaluation from a doctor. Discuss all available treatment options and carefully weigh the risks and benefits associated with each. If your provider prescribes an antidepressant, make sure to request continual follow-ups and careful monitoring—particularly in the first several weeks.
- Know the warning signs of suicide and act quickly if concerned. Many people are afraid to discuss suicide, but it is actually better to be open and direct.
- Separate “fact from fiction” by using credible sources based on sound medical science rather than rumor or opinion. Beware of extreme claims, such as antidepressants are “always dangerous” or “never effective.” Such statements are harmful and misleading.
- Remember that the worst possible situation for anyone with depression is to go without any treatment at all.
- If you are taking an antidepressant, do not abruptly discontinue use. This can lead to significant side effects. Instead, discuss any concerns or questions with your treatment provider.

Depression is a very serious health problem that affects 19 million American adults each year. Left untreated, it can lead to significant problems at home, at work and with peers—as well as to life-threatening problems such as heart disease, substance abuse and suicide. In fact, 90 percent of all suicides are attributable to an untreated or under-treated mental or substance abuse disorder, particularly depression. Fortunately, depression is highly treatable with therapy, medication or a combination of the two.

For more information on depression, treatments and other topics, visit www.mentalhealthamerica.net.

Mental Health America is the country's leading nonprofit dedicated to helping ALL people live mentally healthier lives. With our more than 320 affiliates nationwide, we represent a growing movement of Americans who promote mental wellness for the health and well-being of the nation—everyday and in times of crisis.

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