



# Live Well, Work Well

Health and wellness tips for your work, home and life—brought to you by Lawley



## SSRIS: THE MOST COMMONLY PRESCRIBED ANTIDEPRESSANT

In a world increasingly open to discussions about mental health, selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) have become a cornerstone in the treatment of depression and other mental health disorders. Whether you, a family member or a close friend take these medications, understanding how they work, their benefits and their potential side effects can foster better conversations about mental health and treatment options.

### What Are SSRIs?

SSRIs are a class of antidepressants designed to increase serotonin levels in the brain. Serotonin is a neurotransmitter that regulates mood, sleep and overall emotional well-being. By preventing the reabsorption (reuptake) of serotonin into neurons, SSRIs ensure that more serotonin remains available in the brain, which can help alleviate symptoms of depression.

### Who Are SSRIs For?

SSRIs are prescribed to individuals experiencing various mental health conditions, including the following:

- **Major depressive disorder**—These disorders are often characterized by persistent sadness, lack of energy and loss of interest in activities.
- **Anxiety disorders**—Generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety and panic disorder fall into this category.
- **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**—Intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviors characterize this disorder.

- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**—PTSD is a condition that can develop after a traumatic event.

SSRIs offer an alternative treatment option to other popular antidepressants, such as bupropion (Wellbutrin). While SSRIs are the most popular category, there is a wide variety of antidepressants that patients can learn more about.

### How Many People Take SSRIs?

The use of SSRIs has soared in recent years, reflecting a greater awareness and acceptance of mental health treatment, as well as an increase in diagnosed mental health conditions. Findings from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention published in 2020 found that approximately 13% of Americans aged 18 and older reported using antidepressants, with SSRIs being the most commonly prescribed. Reports have found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the use of antidepressants increased even further. Among younger populations, the rate of antidepressant prescriptions has also increased, signaling a growing effort to address mental health challenges.

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### Popular SSRIs

Some of the most frequently prescribed SSRIs include the following:

- **Fluoxetine (Prozac)** is one of the first SSRIs approved and still widely used.
- **Sertraline (Zoloft)** is commonly prescribed for both depression and anxiety.
- **Citalopram (Celexa)** is known for its efficacy in treating depression.
- **Escitalopram (Lexapro)** is a refined version of citalopram with fewer side effects.
- **Paroxetine (Paxil)** is often prescribed for anxiety disorders and OCD.

Each medication differs slightly in how it works and the conditions it best addresses, so health care providers tailor prescriptions to individual needs.

### Growing Popularity of SSRIs

SSRIs have grown in popularity due to more options entering the market, more patients seeking treatment options and the demonstrated effectiveness of the prescription drugs.

Many patients report the following benefits of using SSRIs:

- **Improved mood and function**—Many patients experience a significant reduction in depressive symptoms, allowing them to engage more fully in daily activities.
- **Fewer side effects**—Compared to older types of antidepressants, SSRIs are generally well-tolerated and have a lower risk of severe side effects.
- **Wide applicability**—Effective across a range of mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety and panic disorders, SSRIs provide a versatile option for treatment.

### Potential Side Effects

While SSRIs are generally well-tolerated, they are not without side effects. Common [side effects](#) may include the following:

- Nausea
- Headache

- Insomnia or drowsiness
- Sexual dysfunction
- Weight changes

These side effects are mild and temporary for most people, but others may experience more persistent issues. Additionally, discontinuing SSRI treatment abruptly can lead to withdrawal symptoms, such as dizziness, irritability or flu-like sensations. Gradual tapering under a doctor's supervision is essential.

### The Importance of Seeking Professional Guidance

Mental health treatment does not have a one-size-fits-all option. What works for one person may not work for another, and finding the right approach often requires time and professional expertise. In some cases, a patient may not tolerate a certain medication well and needs to work with a provider to find the right treatment option with minimal side effects. If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of depression or anxiety, consulting a primary care provider or mental health professional is a critical first step.

### Taking Charge of Your Mental Health

By learning more about SSRIs, their benefits and their side effects, you empower yourself to make informed decisions about your treatment. Whether it involves SSRIs or other options, learning more about mental health and available treatment options can equip you to work with a health care provider and put together an effective treatment plan.

If you're considering treatment options, don't hesitate to contact your primary care provider. Together, you can determine a plan tailored to your unique needs and circumstances. For those in immediate crisis, the [988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline](#) is free and confidential; call or text 988 for 24/7 support.