

Fluoxetine (say: flew-ox-e-teen) ***



What is fluoxetine?

- Fluoxetine (also called Prozac[®], Zactin[®], Lovan[®]) is usually used to help treat the symptoms of depression (by reducing the time it takes to recover and to help stop the symptoms coming back), anxiety, and OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder).
- It can also help social anxiety, PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), panic, PMS and seasonal affective disorder.
- It is often known as an SSRI (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor).
- It is made as capsules and dispersible tablets.

What does fluoxetine help?

- Fluoxetine can help many symptoms. These can include feeling low, nervous, anxious, very shy, panicky, or having to do things exactly the right way and checking all the time.
- For depression, about 2 in 3 (65%) of people get better with a first antidepressant
- If that doesn't work or because it has too many side effects, then switching to a second antidepressant helps about half of those people (total of about 75%, or 3 in 4 people). There are more options after that e.g. other medicines and therapies.



How and when should I take fluoxetine?

- Swallow the capsules with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat.
- The dispersible tablets can be halved, crushed or dispersed in water just before taking
- It is best taken with or after food in the morning.

How long will I have to wait before it works?

- This will depend on what you are taking it for but for depression the effect usually starts in a week or two, and builds over the next couple of weeks.
- For some other conditions it may take up to 3 months to work fully.



How long will I need to keep taking fluoxetine for?

- This will depend on what you are taking it for, your history and how well you are doing. For depression, if an antidepressant has got you better:
- First episode: Taking it for 6 months reduces the chances of becoming depressed again
- Second episode: Taking it for 1-2yrs reduces the chances of becoming depressed again

Been depressed before but antidepressants don't help much? Ever been irritable, disinhibited, overactive, not sleeping, overspent, disinhibited? Bipolar in the family? If so, it's worth asking: "Could it be bipolar?"

Can I stop taking fluoxetine suddenly?

- It is best not to do this. Talk it over first with other people e.g. your family or your doctor, case manager or pharmacist
- It normally works out better if you stop medication in a planned way at a time when your stress levels are low, rather than e.g. around exam times, mid-winter and life events
- Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after fluoxetine has been stopped
- You should come off fluoxetine by a gradual drop in dose over several weeks
- You might also get some discontinuation symptoms such as 'flu-like symptoms, and sleep disturbance (e.g. more vivid dreams). They can start 1-2 weeks after stopping, usually only last a few weeks (but can be a bit longer) and will go if fluoxetine is started again.



What should I do if I forget to take a dose of fluoxetine at the right time?












- Start again as soon as you remember unless within about 12 hours of your next dose
- After this, just take the next dose as normal
- Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects.

Can I cycle, drive or operate a boat while I am taking fluoxetine?

- You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking fluoxetine.
- Until this wears off, or you know how fluoxetine affects you, be careful cycling and do not drive or operate machines.



What sort of side-effects might I get with fluoxetine?

Very common (more than about 1 in 10 people might get these)	
 <p>Feeling sick or being sick, or stomach pain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking it after food may help • It usually wears off in a few weeks • If not, tell your doctor. 	<p>can't sleep</p>  <p>Not being able to get to sleep at night</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you take the dose early in the day • Let your doctor know as a change in dose may help.
 <p>Sex</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finding it hard to have an orgasm • No desire for sex • Discuss this with your doctor. 	
Common (fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)	
 <p>Headache</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your head is painful, paracetamol usually helps. 	 <p>Not feeling hungry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will usually get your appetite back in a few weeks • If not, let your doctor know next time you meet.
 <p>Diarrhoea</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going to the toilet more than usual and "having the runs" • Drink plenty of water • Get advice from your pharmacist • If it lasts for more than a day or so, contact your doctor. 	 <p>Feeling more anxious or nervous</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This usually only lasts for a few weeks while you get used to your SSRI • If not, tell your doctor next time you meet.
See your doctor if you get any of these rare side effects:	
 <p>Thoughts of harming yourself</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling anxious, restless, poor sleep and feeling you might want to harm yourself • See your doctor in the next day, especially if you are under about 20 years old, started the medicine in the last few weeks, have had a dose change, or may have bipolar depression. 	 <p>Serotonin Syndrome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may feel confused, agitated, restless, sweaty, feverish, fast heart beat, twitching, shivering and shaky • It may happen if you have just started, had a dose increase, overdose, or start to take any other medicines • See your doctor in the next few hours if this happens.
<p>rash</p>  <p>Rash</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This can be a rash or itching seen anywhere on the skin • If this happens, stop taking your SSRI and contact your doctor in the next day. 	 <p>Hyponatremia or "SIADH"</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You do not pass much urine, are tired, confused, muscle cramps and you can get a headache • This can be dangerous so contact your doctor now.

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the maker's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think you might have a side effect, you should ask your doctor, pharmacist or case manager.

Lifeline provides 24hr telephone crisis support on 13 11 14 or visit www.lifeline.org.au for information & downloads

The small print: This leaflet is to help you understand more about fluoxetine. You **must** read the manufacturer's Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) Leaflet. Beware that internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else.

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