

The  
BRO  
Program



# Medication For Anxiety

All you need to know about your  
medication options for anxiety

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# Contents of this Booklet

Why use medication for anxiety?	3
Short-term vs. Long-term medication	4
SSRIs	5
SNRIs	6
Pregabalin	7
Benzodiazepines	8



# Why would I take medication for anxiety?

There are many reasons why you may want to try taking medication for your anxiety:

- talking therapies haven't helped
- you're still waiting to access talking therapy
- you'd prefer not to try psychological therapy

Your GP can offer a variety of different types of medication, depending on your medical history, lifestyle and side effects.

There is no one correct time or situation to begin taking anxiety medication - it all depends on what feels best for you. If your anxiety is significantly affecting your ability to manage everyday life, such as work, school or daily tasks and chores, this might be a good time to start considering taking medication. For people whose parents also have or have had anxiety, medication could be incredibly effective.

While medication is not essential, taking prescriptions for your mental health should be considered just as important as taking medication for your physical health. Both can improve your well-being, and both mental and physical health are essential to a happy and healthy life.

# Short-term vs. Long-term medication

There are different types of medication for anxiety that are prescribed based on what is best for you. Sometimes, you could be on medication that can only be used for the short term, which normally treats your anxiety symptoms in the moment. Alternatively, you could be prescribed long-term medication, which starts working gradually but can be taken for months or years.

## Short-term Medication

Short-term medication is designed to provide quick relief for anxiety or panic attacks, typically easing symptoms within 30-90 minutes. While effective for short-term use, these medications are considered unsafe for prolonged periods. If you require longer-term support, there are other types of medication available.

## Long-term Medication

Long-term medication can take up to six weeks to take effect, but you can continue taking it for as long as necessary. It works by boosting the level of serotonin in your brain, which helps to regulate your mood. Depending on your agreement with your GP, you will generally begin with a low dose that can gradually increase. Unfortunately, long-term medication often comes with several side effects.



# SSRIs

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors



## What are SSRIs?

SSRIs are commonly the first type of medication prescribed to treat anxiety. They are also used to treat various mental health disorders, such as panic disorders, phobias, and PTSD. There are different types of SSRIs that you may be prescribed, such as sertraline, escitalopram and paroxetine.

## What do they do?

SSRIs work by increasing serotonin in the brain. This chemical helps to control mood, emotions, and sleep. It typically takes 2-4 weeks to feel the full benefits, and some early side effects may make you feel worse before you feel better. Generally, a course of treatment lasts for six months, but it can be longer, depending on your GP's advice.



## Side Effects

- Feeling agitated
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Loss of appetite
- Headaches
- Insomnia
- Low sex drive
- Dry mouth
- Excessive sweating
- Feeling sick

# SNRIs

Serotonin and noradrenaline reuptake inhibitors



## What are SNRIs?

If SSRIs don't help to ease your anxiety, you might be prescribed SNRIs. These medications can also be used to treat depression and all types of anxiety. The different types of SNRIs that you might be prescribed are venlafaxine and duloxetine.

## What do they do?

SNRIs work by increasing serotonin and noradrenaline in the brain. Noradrenaline helps to control your fight-or-flight response, which is your body's reaction to anxiety-inducing situations. It typically takes 2-4 weeks to feel the full benefits, and some early side effects may make you feel worse before you feel better. Generally, a course of treatment lasts for six months, but it can be longer, depending on your GP's advice.



## Side Effects

- Feeling agitated
- Insomnia
- Diarrhoea or constipation
- Low sex drive
- Loss of appetite
- Dry mouth
- Headaches
- Excessive sweating
- Feeling sick

# Pregabalin



## What is pregabalin?

Pregabalin is a medication that can be taken 2 or 3 times a day for epilepsy, pain, or anxiety. The different types of pregabalin you may take are named Alzain, Axalid, or Lyrica.

## What does it do?

Pregabalin works by halting the chemicals in your brain that may cause anxiety. This medication is considered safe for individuals over the age of 18 and can be prescribed in tablet or liquid form.

Pregabalin is typically taken for an extended period if it proves to be effective for you, and the dosage may be adjusted based on your response when you first start taking it.



## Side Effects

- Headaches
- Feeling tired (it's advised not to drive if you feel sleepy when taking this medication)
- Mood changes
- Feeling sick
- Blurred vision
- Weight gain
- Memory problems

# Benzodiazepines



## What are Benzodiazepines?

Benzodiazepines are medications used for the short-term relief of anxiety or panic symptoms. They typically start working between 30-90 minutes after being taken and can also be used for insomnia. The most commonly prescribed benzodiazepine is diazepam.

## What do they do?

This medication works by increasing the effects of the chemicals in your brain that influence reasoning, memory and emotions.

They are more likely to be effective the less you take them. They are effective as a short-term treatment, but it isn't recommended to take them for longer than 2-4 weeks, as they are addictive and may stop working as your brain gets used to them.



## Side Effects

- Drowsiness
- Trouble concentrating
- Tremors or shaking in a part of your body
- Headaches
- Low sex-drive