



Consumers Can Help Prevent Harmful Medication Incidents

SafeMedicationUse.ca Newsletter

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Tips for Stopping Antidepressants Safely

Once you and your health care provider have decided to stop your antidepressant, the dose should be lowered slowly, rather than being stopped suddenly. This process is designed to prevent unwanted side effects called withdrawal effects. Some examples of withdrawal effects include headache, nausea, trouble sleeping, flu-like symptoms, and muscle aches. Stopping antidepressants too quickly can also cause a return of your anxiety or depression symptoms—this is called a relapse.

SafeMedicationUse.ca received a report from a consumer who was experiencing tremors, sweating, and other symptoms. While talking with their pharmacist, the consumer shared that they had stopped taking their antidepressant medication a few days earlier, without a defined plan to gradually reduce the dose. The pharmacist recognized that the consumer was experiencing withdrawal symptoms.

SafeMedicationUse.ca has the following tips for consumers to safely stop an antidepressant:

- Talk with your health care provider when you feel the time is right to stop taking your antidepressant. This timing will be different for everyone.
- Work with your health care team to create a medication plan to stop the antidepressant over a period of weeks or months. Withdrawal effects or relapse symptoms can be prevented with enough support before, during, and after you stop taking the medication.
- Ask your pharmacist about suggestions (e.g., using a calendar) to help you follow your plan to stop your antidepressant.
- Ask the health care provider who prescribed your antidepressant or your pharmacist about withdrawal effects or relapse symptoms to watch for. Your plan may need to be adjusted if you experience any of these effects.



Medication safety bulletins contribute to Global Patient Safety Alerts.

This newsletter was developed in collaboration with Best Medicines Coalition and Patients for Patient Safety Canada.

Recommendations are shared with healthcare providers, through the ISMP Canada Safety Bulletin, so that changes can be made together.

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