

## Cymbalta (duloxetine)

**Cymbalta** is a medication most commonly used for depression, though it may also be used to treat anxiety, neuropathic or musculoskeletal pain or fibromyalgia. It belongs to a class of drugs called SNRIs (Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors). An educational handout about SNRIs is also available.

Patients are often started on drugs with limited discussion about intended benefits or the likely or potential side effects. This document is intended to augment information that may have already been provided. If you have questions, please ask the primary provider.

When used to treat depression or anxiety, improvement would be expected in weeks to months, not days. Conversely, if there is no benefit in several months, there is very little chance that it will ever work. When this particular medication is used in seniors, there is seldom benefit at doses above 60 milligrams daily. It can almost always be given as a single daily dose. It may interfere with normal sleep patterns and may cause either insomnia or somnolence, so the time of day to take it may vary from person to person.

Potential adverse effects are unusual, but they do happen. Both “Serious” reactions can occur as well as others that are more “Common”. Lists like this are available from many sources and are not always identical. There is no intent to list every possible side effect or to address the potential interactions that may occur with concomitant use with other drugs (e.g., this drug may make bleeding more likely in patients on Coumadin or other blood thinners).

### Potential Serious Reactions

Worsening Depression	Abnormal / Excess Bleeding	Glaucoma
Mania / Manic Episodes	Severe High Blood Pressure	Anaphylaxis / Allergic Reactions
Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (mental change, rigid muscles, fever, fast heart rate, sweating, fast breathing)	Hyponatremia (Low Sodium)	Severe Skin Reactions
Extrapyramidal Symptoms (restless, Parkinsons, muscle contractions)	SIADH (Impaired water excretion)	Heart Arrhythmias
Hepatotoxicity (Liver Failure)	Urinary Retention (hard to void)	Withdrawal Symptoms (when abruptly discontinued)
	Serotonin Syndrome	
	Seizures	

### Common Side Effects

Nausea / Vomiting	Fatigue	Tremors
Cracked Lips	Diarrhea	Anxiety
Constipation	Decreased Appetite / Weight Loss	High or Low Blood Pressure
Insomnia or Somnolence	Blurred Vision	Abnormal Liver Function Tests
Dizziness / Fainting	Headache	Falls / Fractures

More educational materials and information are available on the FDA’s website at:

<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm088579.pdf>

When a resident’s depressive or anxious symptoms do not respond favorably after several months of use or when side effects attributable to the medication occur, the facility and providers may taper the medication (slowly reduce the dose) to see if it can be discontinued.