

Paxil (Paroxetine)

Paroxetine (marketed as Paxil) is in a class of drugs called Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs; educational handout available) used to treat depression, anxiety and other mood disorders. This document is to augment information that may have already been provided. If you have questions, please ask the primary provider.

When Paxil is used, 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 work at the dose given. It often makes persons sleepy, so may be given at bedtime.

Paxil, like all drugs, includes a potential for side effects. Medical conditions and other drugs should be considered first as possible causes. For example, anxiety is a *known* side effect of some asthma drugs, benzodiazepines, steroids, antidepressants, illicit drugs, sleeping pills and many herbals (eg, ma huang, St John's Wort, ginseng, belladonna, guarana).

Counseling may help, but is limited to patients with an ability to retain information (eg, *not useful in dementia*) and those without a major psychiatric disorder (eg, *schizophrenia*) for which counseling would not be effective. It is not intended to be frequent or ongoing, so if no meaningful, lasting improvement is seen within a few months, it should be discontinued.

When patients are started on Paxil, the facility closely tracks outcomes. If residents do not respond favorably or have side effects that may be caused by Paxil, attempts to taper and/or discontinue it will occur. Federal Regulations require these efforts at specified time intervals unless there is explicit documentation why doing so would likely put the resident in imminent clinical danger *based on* current documentation. "*Leave well enough alone*" is neither in the patient's best interest nor allowable under Federal Regulations.

Adverse effects (both serious and common) are unusual, but do happen, especially when used with other drugs. Below are potential adverse effects from one of these lists.

Potential **Serious** Reactions with Paxil Use

Worsening Depression	Severe High Blood Pressure	Severe Skin Reactions
Mania / Manic Episodes	Hyponatremia (Low Sodium)	Pneumonia
Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (mental change, rigid muscles, fever, fast heart rate & breathing, sweating)	SIADH (Impaired water excretion)	Pancreatitis
Extrapyramidal Symptoms (restless, Parkinsons, muscle contractions)	Serotonin Syndrome	Heart Arrhythmias
Abnormal / Excess Bleeding	Seizures	Blood Dyscrasias (abnormal blood cells)
	Interstitial Lung Disease (scarring)	Withdrawal Symptoms (when abruptly discontinued)
	Glaucoma	
	Anaphylaxis / Allergic Reactions	

Common Side Effects associated with Paxil

Nausea / Vomiting	Weakness	Tremors
Cracked Lips	Infections	High Cholesterol
Constipation	Diarrhea	Anxiety
Insomnia or Somnolence	Decreased Appetite / Weight Loss	Abnormal Dreams
Dizziness	Blurred Vision / Dilated Pupils	Headache
Nervousness	Paresthesias (funny skin sensations)	High Blood Pressure
Sweating / Chills	Falls / Fractures	Rash

More educational materials and information are available on the FDA's website at:
<http://www.fda.gov/downloads/Drugs/DrugSafety/ucm088586.pdf>