**Pristiq (desvenlafaxine)**

Pristiq is a medication most rarely used for depression or to treat anxiety. 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 little chance that it will ever work. There is no proven additional benefit at doses above 50 milligrams daily. It can be given as a single daily dose or is often used every other day in seniors as it lasts a long time in the body. 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.

### Potential Serious Reactions

- Worsening Depression
- Mania / Manic Episodes
- Serotonin Syndrome
- Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (mental change, rigid muscles, fever, fast heart rate, sweating, fast breathing)
- Seizures
- Extrapyramidal Symptoms (restless, Parkinsons, muscle contractions)
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Attack or Angina
- Fast Heart Rate
- Hyponatremia (Low Sodium)
- SIADH (Impaired water excretion)
- Abnormal / Excess Bleeding
- Glaucma
- Interstitial Lung Disease (scarring of lung tissue)
- Pneumonia (Eosinophilic)
- Anaphylaxis / Allergic Reactions
- Withdrawal Symptoms (when abruptly discontinued)

### Common Side Effects

- Nausea / Vomiting
- Headache
- Cracked Lips
- Excessive Sweating
- Insomnia or Somnolence
- Diarrhea
- Muscle Loss / Weakness
- Decreased Appetite / Weight Loss
- Fatigue
- Tremors
- Anxiety / Nervousness
- Dilated Pupils
- Blurred Vision
- Chills
- Abnormal Dreams
- Fast Heart Rate / Palpitations
- Abnormal sensations in skin
- Irritability
- High Blood Pressure
- Increased Cholesterol
- Urinary Problems
- Ringing in the ears
- Rash
- Impaired Sense of Taste
- Falls / Fractures

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


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.