

**MedicineNet.com**  
**Popular Depression Medications**  
A Helpful Guide to Antidepressant Drugs

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## **From the Doctors of MedicineNet.com**

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### **By Doctors, For You**

The health and medical content presented here was produced entirely by physicians. But it is not just for physicians, nurses or allied health professionals. It was designed to be of use to everyone concerned about health -- their health and/or the health of those that matter to them. The fact that the content is 100% doctor-produced by MedicineNet.com ensures an unusual degree of professional expertise, reliability, and perspective that is sensitive to the needs of people facing health issues.

Medicine is a field that is advancing rapidly on many fronts and its language is continually evolving. In today's health industry, there is constant communication between and among both consumers and providers of healthcare. There is consequently a particular need for contemporary medical and health content of high quality.

In the modern day complex healthcare environment, patients, their physicians, nurses, and allied health professionals must be able to discuss the ever-changing aspects of health, disease, and biotechnology. An accurate understanding of medical terminology can assist communication and improve care for patients, as well as help to alleviate the concerns of families and friends.

We hope that you will find this content a valuable addition to your library. This information is current as of the print date. We invite you to visit us on the Internet at <http://www.medicinenet.com> for updates.

Sincerely,

-- The Medical Editors, MedicineNet.com

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## Popular Depression Medications

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Depression is an illness that involves the body, mood, and thoughts, that affects the way a person eats and sleeps, the way one feels about oneself, and the way one thinks about things. The signs and symptoms of depression include loss of interest in activities that were once interesting or enjoyable. The principal types of depression are major depression, dysthymia, and bipolar disease (also called manic-depressive or manic depression disease).

To learn more about depression, visit MedicineNet.com's main depression article: <http://www.medicinenet.com/Depression/article.htm>.

You can also find additional depression related articles in MedicineNet's depression area: <http://www.medicinenet.com/depression/focus.htm>

The editors of MedicineNet have organized a listing with brief descriptions of some of the more popular depression related medications in use today. For more detailed information, go to the Internet link provided next to each medication.

The depression medications (which includes antidepressant drugs) here are listed alphabetically by generic name, with brand names in parentheses. Generic and branded depression related medications may differ in the amount of drug they contain, the absorption of the drug into the body, and the distribution of the drug throughout the body.

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### ***amitriptyline (brand names: Elavil, Endep)***

An antidepressant medication. In some patients with depression, abnormal levels of brain chemicals called neurotransmitters may relate to the depression. Amitriptyline elevates mood by raising the level of neurotransmitters in brain tissue. Amitriptyline is also a sedative that is useful for depressed patients with insomnia, restlessness, and nervousness. It is also helpful in treating fibromyalgia and symptoms related to chronic pain. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*  
<http://www.medicinenet.com/amitriptyline/article.htm>

**bupropion (brand names: Wellbutrin, Zyban, Wellbutrin SR)**

An antidepressant medication that affects chemicals within the brain that nerves use to send messages to each other. These chemical messengers are called neurotransmitters. The neurotransmitters that are released by nerves are taken up again by the nerves that release them for reuse (referred to as reuptake). Many experts believe that depression is caused by an imbalance among the amounts of neurotransmitters that are released. Bupropion is unrelated to other antidepressants. It works by inhibiting the reuptake of the neurotransmitters dopamine, serotonin, and norepinephrine, resulting in more of these chemicals being available to transmit messages to other nerves. Bupropion is unique in that its major effect is on dopamine. Wellbutrin and Wellbutrin SR are used for the management of depression. Zyban has been approved as an aid to patients who want to quit smoking. Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/bupropion/article.htm>

**buspirone (brand name: Buspar)**

A medication for the treatment of anxiety that works by stimulating serotonin receptors on nerves thereby altering the chemical messages that nerves transmit to each other. Unlike the most commonly prescribed anti-anxiety medications of the benzodiazepine class (e.g., diazepam, lorazepam, alprazolam, clonazepam), buspirone does not cause sedation. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/buspirone/article.htm>

**citalopram (brand name: Celexa)**

A medication used to treat depression that works by affecting chemical transmitters (neurotransmitters) within the brain. Neurotransmitters manufactured and released by nerves attach to adjacent nerves and alter their activities. Thus, neurotransmitters can be thought of as the communication system of the brain. Many experts believe that an imbalance among neurotransmitters is the cause of depression. Citalopram works by preventing the uptake of one neurotransmitter, serotonin, by nerve cells after it has been released. Such uptake is an important mechanism for removing released neurotransmitters and terminating their actions on adjacent nerves. The reduced uptake caused by citalopram results in more free serotonin in the brain to stimulate nerve cells. Citalopram is in the class of drugs for depression called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a class that also contains fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil) and sertraline (Zoloft). Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/citalopram/article.htm>

**desipramine (brand name: Norpramin)**

A medication that is used to treat depression, defined as an all-pervasive sense of sadness and gloom. Desipramine belongs to the tricyclic class of antidepressants called tricyclic antidepressants or TCAs. In some patients with depression, abnormal levels of neurotransmitters in the brain (chemicals that the nerves use to communicate with each other) may be responsible for the depression. Desipramine elevates mood and relieves depression by raising the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain. Desipramine is also responsible for the antidepressant effects of another TCA, imipramine (Tofranil), since imipramine is converted by the body to desipramine. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/desipramine/article.htm>

**escitalopram (brand name: Lexapro)**

A medication that is used for treating depression (an antidepressant). It works by affecting neurotransmitters in the brain, the chemical messengers that nerves use to communicate with one another. Neurotransmitters are made and released by nerves and then travel to other nearby nerves where they attach to receptors on the nerves. Some neurotransmitters that are released do not bind to receptors and are taken up by the nerves that produced them. This is referred to as “reuptake.” Many experts believe that an imbalance of neurotransmitters is the cause of depression. Escitalopram prevents the reuptake of one neurotransmitter, serotonin, by nerves, an action which results in more serotonin in the brain to attach to receptors. Chemically, escitalopram is very similar to citalopram. Both are in the class of drugs called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a class that also includes fluoxetine (Prozac), paroxetine (Paxil) and sertraline (Zoloft). Generic is not available

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/escitalopram/article.htm>

**fluoxetine (brand name: Prozac)**

A class of antidepressant medications that affects chemical messengers within the brain. These chemical messengers are called neurotransmitters. Many experts believe that an imbalance in these neurotransmitters is the cause of depression. Fluoxetine is used in the treatment of depression and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Fluoxetine is believed to work by inhibiting the release of or affecting the action of serotonin. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/fluoxetine/article.htm>

**fluvoxamine (brand name: Luvox)**

A medication used to treat depression (antidepressant) that affects the chemicals within the brain that serve as messengers between the nerve cells. These chemical messengers are called neurotransmitters. Many experts believe that an imbalance in these neurotransmitters is the cause of depression. Fluvoxamine works by inhibiting the uptake by the nerve cells of a neurotransmitter, serotonin, an action which results in more serotonin in the brain. Fluvoxamine is in the class of drugs called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), a class that also includes fluoxetine (Prozac) sertraline (Zoloft), and paroxetine (Paxil). It also has been used in the management of obsessive-compulsive disorder, obesity, bulimia, schizophrenia, and panic disorder. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/fluvoxamine/article.htm>

**imipramine (brand name: Tofranil)**

Imipramine is an antidepressant medication of the tricyclic class. Medications in this class are often referred to as tricyclic antidepressants or TCAs. Depression is defined as an all-pervasive sense of sadness and gloom. In patients with depression, abnormal levels of chemicals in the brain (called neurotransmitters) may be the cause of their depression. These neurotransmitters are what the nerves in the brain use to communicate with each other. Imipramine elevates mood by raising the level of neurotransmitters in brain tissue. Imipramine also is used for childhood enuresis (bedwetting), several disorders associated with chronic pain, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Imipramine is useful in depressed patients with insomnia, restlessness, and nervousness. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/imipramine/article.htm>

**lithium (brand names: Eskalith, Lithobid)**

A medication used for the treatment of manic/depressive (bipolar) and depressive disorders. Lithium is a positively charged element or particle that is similar to sodium and potassium. It interferes at several places inside cells and on the cell surface with other positively charged atoms such as sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium which are important in many cellular functions. Lithium interferes with the synthesis and reuptake of chemical messengers by which nerves communicate with each other (neurotransmitters). Lithium also affects the concentrations of tryptophan and serotonin in the brain. In addition, lithium increases the production of white blood cells in the bone marrow. Lithium's effects usually begin within one week of starting treatment, and the full effect is seen by 2 to 3 weeks. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/lithium/article.htm>

***mirtazapine (brand name: Remeron)***

A medication used to treat depression (antidepressant) in the same class as maprotiline (Ludiomil). Although the precise mechanism of action of this class of antidepressants is not known, they increase the amount of noradrenaline and serotonin in the brain. Noradrenaline and serotonin are neurotransmitters, chemicals that nerves use to communicate with each other. Mirtazapine also acts as an antihistamine similar to diphenhydramine (Benadryl). Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/mirtazapine/article.htm>

***nefazodone (brand name: Serzone)***

A medication used to treat depression (antidepressant) that affects chemicals in the brain that nerves use to send messages to each other, called neurotransmitters. The neurotransmitters that are released by nerves are taken up again by the nerves that release them for reuse. Many experts believe that depression is caused by an imbalance among the amounts of neurotransmitters that are released. Nefazodone works by inhibiting the uptake by nerves of serotonin and norepinephrine, two neurotransmitters, an action which results in more serotonin and norepinephrine to transmit messages to other nerves.

Nefazodone is chemically unrelated to the serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), the tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs), or the monoamine oxidase (MAO) inhibitors. It is chemically related to another antidepressant, trazodone (Desyrel), and shares its actions. Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/nefazodone/article.htm>

***nortriptyline (brand names: Pamelor, Aventyl)***

A medication used to treat depression (antidepressant) of the tricyclic class. Medications in this class are often referred to as tricyclic antidepressants, or TCAs. Depression is an all-pervasive sense of sadness and gloom. In some patients with depression, abnormal levels of brain neurotransmitters (chemicals that the nerve cells use to communicate with each other) may be responsible for the depression. Nortriptyline elevates the mood ("anti-depresses") by raising the level of neurotransmitters in brain tissue. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

<http://www.medicinenet.com/nortriptyline/article.htm>

**paroxetine (brand names: Paxil, Paxil CR)**

An antidepressant medication that affects the chemicals that nerves in the brain use to send messages to one another. Paroxetine is used for the management of depression, obsessive-compulsive disorders, and panic disorders. Paroxetine is felt to work by affecting chemical messengers, called neurotransmitters, in the brain. Many experts believe that an imbalance among the amounts of the different neurotransmitters that are released causes depression. Paroxetine works by inhibiting the reuptake of serotonin by the nerves that release it, an action that allows more serotonin to be available to be taken up by other nerves. Paroxetine is in a class of drugs called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*  
<http://www.medicinenet.com/paroxetine/article.htm>

**sertraline (brand name: Zoloft)**

A medication that is used to treat psychological illnesses, including depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder. Sertraline belongs to a class of drugs called selective serotonin uptake inhibitors. Serotonin is a chemical messenger produced by nerve cells in the brain that is used by the nerves to communicate with one another. A nerve releases the serotonin it produces into the space surrounding it. The serotonin either travels across the space and attaches to receptors on the surface of nearby nerves or attaches to receptors on the surface of the nerve that produced it to be taken up, recycled, and released again (a process referred to as reuptake). A balance is reached for serotonin between attachment to the nearby nerves and reuptake. It is believed that some illnesses, such as depression, are caused by disturbances in the function of the receptors that alter the balance of serotonin. The leading theory is that drugs such as sertraline alter the receptors in a manner that restores the balance. Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*  
<http://www.medicinenet.com/sertraline/article.htm>

**trazodone (brand name: Desyrel)**

An antidepressant that affects the chemical messengers (neurotransmitters) within the brain that nerves use to communicate with each other. The major neurotransmitters are acetylcholine, norepinephrine, dopamine, and serotonin. Many experts believe that an imbalance among these different neurotransmitters is the cause of depression. Although the exact mechanism of action of trazodone is unknown, it probably improves symptoms of depression by inhibiting the uptake of serotonin by nerves in the brain. This results in more serotonin being available to stimulate other nerves. Trazodone may also directly increase the action of serotonin. Generic is available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*  
<http://www.medicinenet.com/trazodone/article.htm>

***trimipramine (brand name: Surmontil)***

Trimipramine is a tricyclic antidepressant (TCA), the same family as amitriptyline (Elavil), imipramine (Tofranil), nortriptyline (Pamelor; Aventyl), and desipramine (Norpramin). Trimipramine works by raising the brain's level of norepinephrine (a neurotransmitter) to more normal levels. It also has anti-cholinergic actions (opposing the effects of the neurotransmitter, acetylcholine) which cause many of its side effects. Trimipramine also acts as a sedative. Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

*<http://www.medicinenet.com/trimipramine/article.htm>*

***venlafaxine (brand name: Effexor)***

A medication used to treat depression (antidepressant) that affects chemical messengers within the brain. These chemical messengers are called neurotransmitters, and some examples are serotonin, dopamine, and norepinephrine. Neurotransmitters are manufactured by nerve cells and are released by the cells. The neurotransmitters travel to nearby nerve cells and cause the cells to become more or less active. Many experts believe that an imbalance in these neurotransmitters is the cause of depression and also may play a role in anxiety. Venlafaxine is believed to work by inhibiting the release or affecting the action of these neurotransmitters. Generic is not available.

*For more information visit the drug monograph:*

*<http://www.medicinenet.com/venlafaxine/article.htm>*

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## MedicineNet.com – Additional Resources

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Below are text links to additional information available on the Web site MedicineNet.com.

The doctor-produced articles on MedicineNet.com are:

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### Procedures and Tests

[http://www.medicinenet.com/procedures\\_and\\_tests/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/procedures_and_tests/article.htm)

### Medications (over-the-counter and prescription drugs)

<http://www.medicinenet.com/medications/article.htm>

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