CHENNAI MINDS LEAFLET – ANTIDEPRESSANTS - SSRIs

All You Need To Know About Antidepressants

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WHAT IS AN ANTIDEPRESSANT?



SSRIs are the most commonly used antidepressants today. Antidepressants correct chemical imbalances in your brain especially serotonin, dopamine, norepinephrine. It is known that patients with depression have a low level of serotonin in their brain. This chemical is necessary for the feel good factor in the brain. This chemical improves the mood, appetite, digestion, sleep, memory, sexual desire and function.

MECHANISM OF ACTION:

SSRI increase the levels of serotonin in the brain by blocking the re-uptake and breakdown of the chemical and therefore there is plenty of this chemical available in the brain. By increasing the level of the feel good chemical in the brain, patients will be able to manage their depression better. They may not be able to cure depression completely, but the symptoms can be managed very well with a great degree of success. It is possible that if you stop taking antidepressants your underlying condition may re-surface. It is common for antidepressants to be continued for 6 months to 2 years after an episode of depression.

HOW LONG DO THEY TAKE TO WORK?

Antidepressants typically take 4- 6 weeks to work so it is important that you persist with taking medications regularly. The reason for this is because of the way the antidepressants work. They work indirectly, by preventing reuptake of the chemical serotonin. This action is on the genes that control the production and transport of serotonin.

SIDE EFFECTS:

Side effects include stomach related symptoms, migraine, sex related problems, drowsiness, rash, blurred vision, weight gain and increase in sucidial thoughts all occur but are very much treatable.



PRECAUTIONS FOR USE:

Excess serotonin causes Serotonin syndrome. This are symptoms of increased activity of the brain like anxiety, sweating, increased heart beat and dizziness. DO NOT stop any antidepressant suddenly (as this may cause serotonin discontinuation syndrome) and so it must be slowly tapered and stopped when stopping.

OTHER SUPPORTIVE TREATMENTS:

Sometimes antidepressants are combined with Cognitive behaviour therapy or counselling to target negative automatic thoughts.

DISCLAIMER

All the details contained in this leaflet are for information purposes only. You need to consult a Consultant Psychiatrist well trained to treat this condition. CHENNAI MINDS takes no responsibility for the information or the consequences of the decision made on reading this information leaflet.