



# MENTAL HEALTH MEDICATIONS

→ *If you are feeling stressed, anxious or depressed, talk to your family doctor. If you have been given a prescription for a psychotropic medication, you probably have many questions. This sheet may help answer some of your questions but remember to always talk to your family doctor first.*

## REMEMBER

For assistance and connection to appropriate agencies, please speak to your family doctor who can also make a referral to a behavioural health consultant. The behavioural health consultant will provide support and guidance in getting you the services you need.

## HELPFUL RESOURCES

Alberta Health Services  
Addictions Helpline, 24 hour support & information:  
**Toll-free: 1.866.332.2322**

Please talk to your family physician about PCN services.

[edmontonsouthsidepcn.ca](http://edmontonsouthsidepcn.ca)

## QUESTIONS

### What does psychotropic medication mean?

Psychotropic medications include drugs for depression, anxiety, sleep disorders, obsessive compulsive behaviour and other mood or behavioural problems.

### Will the psychotropic medication change my personality or my way of thinking?

Mental illness can change the way you think, see and react to everyday events. Psychotropic medications can be prescribed to help manage some of these symptoms.

### Can I drink alcohol while taking psychotropic medications?

It is not recommended to drink alcohol when you are taking psychotropic medications as the effects of alcohol can vary. Alcohol can change the effect of the psychotropic medication. Talk to your family doctor or a pharmacist about your individual situation.

### Will I gain weight?

Some psychotropic medications can cause weight changes. Your family doctor can choose the medicine that fits you best. Making good lifestyle choices assists in maintaining a healthy weight. Your family physician, nurse, dietitian or

behavioural health consultant can help you make these healthy choices.

### What side effects are common to psychotropic medications?

Side effects vary by the type of psychotropic medication. If you experience any side effects, report them to your doctor immediately.

### When can I stop taking my psychotropic medication?

The medication should only be stopped with your family doctor's supervision. Only your doctor can decide if you can stop it right away or if you need to stop taking your medication gradually to minimize any withdrawal symptoms or to prevent problems from recurring. Uncontrolled withdrawal of the medication may require medical intervention and/or psychological support. Some illnesses may require taking a medication for a long time. Discuss your options with your family doctor.

### Will I develop a dependence on the psychotropic medication?

Dependence can develop with certain psychotropic medications, often related to anxiety and insomnia treatment. Your family doctor can assist you with finding the best medication for you.



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### **Can I use herbal medications, vitamin supplements and over-the-counter medications while using the psychotropic medication?**

Medicines you can purchase from the pharmacy or health food stores can interact with psychotropic medication. Some of these interactions may be harmful or dangerous. If you are considering using any non-prescription products, talk to your family doctor or pharmacist to see if they are safe for you to use.

### **Can I use psychotropic medication if I am pregnant or nursing?**

Pregnant women should take good care of their physical and mental health. This ensures the well-being of themselves and their unborn babies. Some women may need psychotropic medication and/or access to mental health support during pregnancy. The decision to use psychotropic medications during pregnancy or while breastfeeding is very important. It must be discussed with your family doctor. If you are taking medication and planning to become pregnant, discuss your plans with your doctor. If you discover you are pregnant, talk to your doctor as soon as possible.

### **Are psychotropic medications safe to use in children?**

Children's disorders may be more challenging to treat. Children may have difficulty expressing themselves or explaining their symptoms. Children, like adults, have many treatment options including medications, psychotherapy, behavioural therapy,

treatment of impaired social skills, parental and family therapy, or group therapy. The treatment is based on the diagnosis and individual needs of the child.

Parents, teachers and anyone who has responsibility for children must closely watch children taking medications. Children should be watched and questioned for side effects. They should also be monitored to ensure they are actually taking the medication properly.

### **Are psychotropic medications safe for use by older patients?**

Older adults are at higher risk for medical problems. They often take medications for more than one problem. Being more sensitive to medications, older patients get rid of some drugs from the body slower than younger people. So they may require a lower or less frequent dosage to maintain effective levels of medications. If you have any concerns about how much medicine you take, talk to your family doctor.