

find out about...

**tricyclic
antidepressants**

a publication from



Why have I been prescribed this drug?

Tricyclic and related Antidepressants (TCAs) are prescribed for people suffering from depression or anxiety/depression. They have been around for many years. Some TCAs have sedative properties, and can be helpful for anxiety based conditions and certain disorders. These can include: anxiety, chronic pain, depression, migraines, obsessive compulsive disorder, panic attacks and phobias.

What are the drugs available?

If you have been prescribed any of the drugs listed below, you have been prescribed a TCA. The first name is what is called the 'generic' name and the name in brackets is the 'brand' name, which can vary depending on who makes the drug. Both names should be on the packet (or in the accompanying information leaflet) of your drug.

AMITRIPTYLINE (TRYPTIZOL, LENTIZOL)

AMOXAPINE (ASCENDIS)

CLOMIPRAMINE (ANAFRANIL)

DOTHIEPIN OR DOSULEPIN (PROTHIADEN)

DOXEPIN (SINEQUAN)

IMIPRAMINE (TOFRANIL)

LOFEPRAMINE (GAMANIL)

MAPROTYLINE (LUDIOMIL)

NORTRIPTYLINE (ALLEGRON, AVENTIL)

PROTRIPTYLINE (CONCORDIN)

TRIMIPRAMINE (SURMONTIL)

TRAZODONE (MOLIPAXIN)

How do they work?

Chemicals that are naturally present in our brains are thought to play a part in our emotions, sleep patterns, mood and appetite. When someone becomes depressed it is thought that the levels of these chemicals are affected, disrupting day to day functioning. TCAs, like other antidepressants, alter the balance, and this may result in the feeling of depression or anxiety becoming easier to manage.

If there are underlying personal reasons for why you feel depressed or anxious – for example a family situation or work problems, you will still need to address these. The TCAs can help lift your mood – but will not help in the long term if there are other factors in your life that are causing your illness.

How long do I need to take them for?

TCAs can take from two to six weeks to fully start working. How long you will need to continue taking them will depend on your illness and how soon you recover. You may be advised that you have to take them for some months after you have recovered. It would be quite usual to take them for at least six months. If your depression or anxiety is more deep-seated or severe you may need to take them for longer periods of time.

You may have particular questions about how long you will need to take them. Do not be afraid to ask your doctor - although they may be busy they are there to help you recover.

What side effects do they have?

Different drugs affect people in different ways. Some will not report side effects, (also known as adverse or negative affects) at all. Some will experience side effects but will still benefit from the drug. Others will find that the side effects outweigh the benefits of the drug.

Side effects can include:

Drowsiness

Dizziness

Constipation

Nausea

Dry mouth

Diarrhoea

Blurred vision

Tiredness

Difficulty in passing urine

Headache

Anxiety

Abnormal heart rhythms

If you are experiencing side effects that are causing you problems you should discuss this with your doctor. It should be possible for you to try different antidepressants, to see if others work better for you. Side effects are very subjective – someone else may take the same drug and have a very different experience.



How easy is it to stop taking them?

Many people have reported problems when trying to stop taking a TCA. The best way to withdraw is to reduce in small doses, however, it seems that different TCAs carry different risks in this regard, some people suffer no ill effects at all. It is not advisable to stop taking a TCA without help from a health professional.

What should I do if I don't feel any better?

As TCAs take some weeks to work, you may feel that you are not improving at first. If after the time stated, you don't feel any better, you should seek further medical advice. You and your doctor should jointly decide whether your dose should be changed, or if you should try another medication.



Is there anything else I should know?

It is important that you tell your pharmacist if you are on any other medication as some can interact with TCAs.

If you suffer from kidney or liver problems or if you have epilepsy or diabetes then you should mention this to your GP. People with a history of heart problems should not be prescribed TCAs.

TCAs cannot be taken for two to three weeks if you have previously been taking an MOAI (Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitor) antidepressant and some SSRI antidepressants.

If you are pregnant, breastfeeding or if you are planning to become pregnant you should talk to your doctor. Any decision to use medication in these situations must be as a result of an informed discussion between yourself and your doctor.

If you have any queries regarding your medication, either speak to a health professional e.g., pharmacist or doctor or consult one of the information services listed at the end of this leaflet.

Further information

SAMH Information Service

Scottish Association for Mental Health

Cumrae House

15 Carlton Court

Glasgow G5 9JP

Tel: 0141 568 7000

www.samh.org.uk

Norfolk Mental Health Care Trust:

Pharmacy medicine information website.

www.nmhct.nhs.uk/pharmacy

Depression Alliance:

3 Grosvenor Gardens

Edinburgh

EH12 5JU

Tel: 0131 467 3050

www.depressionalliance.org.uk

Stresswatch Scotland

23 Campbell Street

Kilmarnock

KA1 4HW

Tel: 01536 574144

www.stresswatchscotland.org

The information contained in our leaflets is believed, but not warranted, to be accurate as at the date of publication. If you have any queries as to how any of the information in our leaflets may apply to your own particular circumstances, it is recommended that you contact your doctor or a pharmacist.

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