

Starting Antidepressants

How do you choose which medication to start for a patient with depression and/or anxiety?

You can use the [Mayo Clinic Depression Medication Choice Decision Aid](#) to discuss potential **side effects and tradeoffs** with patients. This tool has been [shown](#) to improve shared decision making. It is available on the [PC-BHIP website](#). In the DCAM PCG clinic, it is available in the hallway bins. If your clinic is interested in getting printed copies, please let the PC-BHIP team know!

		LOSS 1 TO 5 LBS	WEIGHT ↑	GAIN 1 TO 5 LBS	SEX	SLEEP	COST	STOPPING
SSRIs	✓ Citalopram <small>Celexa®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Escitalopram <small>Lexapro®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Fluoxetine <small>Prozac®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Fluvoxamine <small>Luvox®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Paroxetine <small>Paxil®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Sertraline <small>Zoloft®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
SNRIs	✓ Desvenlafaxine <small>Pristiq®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Duloxetine <small>Cymbalta®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Venlafaxine <small>Effexor®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
Others	✓ Bupropion <small>Wellbutrin®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
	✓ Mirtazapine <small>Remeron®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●
TCA	✓ Amitriptyline or Nortriptyline <small>Elavil® or Aventyl HCl®</small>	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●	●	●	●

Potential **secondary benefits** can also be helpful to consider when deciding which medication to start:

- Neuropathic and arthritic pain: SNRIs like duloxetine
- Obesity: fluoxetine or bupropion
- Family history of bipolar disorder: bupropion is a safer option
- Tobacco use disorder: bupropion
- ADHD: bupropion
- Insomnia: mirtazapine and nortriptyline can be helpful adjunctive treatments

Additional considerations when starting a patient on these drugs:

- Normalize that they may experience side effects (e.g., upset stomach, diarrhea) and reassure them that most side effects are temporary.
- Re-measure symptoms and increase the dose if needed over time. More guidance on how to interpret PHQ-9 results and choose and adjust medications is available in our [clinical decision support tools](#).