

# Switching Antidepressants

## How do you **switch** a patient from one antidepressant to another?

There are two strategies you can use:

- 1. Cross-tapering.** This method can be used when patients are: 1) taking a high dose SSRI/SNRI, 2) taking a non-SSRI/SNRI, or 3) switching from an SSRI/SNRI to a non-SSRI/SNRI.
  - To cross-taper, you decrease the dose of the old medication while increasing the dose of the new medication.
    - SSRI/SNRI/TCAs can be tapered over 1-2 weeks.
    - Other antidepressants can be tapered over 1-4 weeks.
  - It is important to consider the medication dosages the patient has/will have access to, as well as if the drugs can be split in half or not.
- 2. Direct switch.** This method can be used when switching from a low-medium dose SSRI to another SSRI/SNRI.
  - To direct switch, you identify a slightly lower dose of the new medication and tell the patient to stop the old SSRI and start the new SSRI/SNRI on the same day.
  - [Here](#) is a table of equivalent dosages across medication classes.

The [table](#) below summarizes when to cross-taper vs. direct switch:

Switching from	Switching to	Suggested approach
SSRI <sup>a,b</sup>	Other SSRI or SNRI	Direct switch to equivalent or lower dose; consider a cross-taper when higher doses of the initial SSRI/SNRI are used
SSRI or SNRI	TCA	Cross-taper over 1-2 weeks; start with lower TCA doses if switching from an agent with CYP2D6 (eg, fluoxetine, paroxetine, duloxetine) <sup>a,b,c</sup> or CYP1A2 (eg, fluvoxamine) inhibition
Any antidepressant (except MAOIs)	Mirtazapine or bupropion	Cross-taper <sup>b</sup> (when switching from an SSRI/SNRI, it is recommended to cross-taper over 1-4 weeks to minimize serotonin discontinuation syndrome)
Bupropion <sup>b</sup>	Other antidepressant	Cross-taper over 1-3 weeks
Mirtazapine	Other antidepressant	Cross-taper
TCA <sup>c</sup>	Other antidepressant	Cross-taper over 1-2 weeks
MAOI	A different MAOI or other antidepressant	Reduce MAOI dose gradually over 2-4 weeks and wait at least 2 weeks after discontinuation of the MAOI before initiating new medication
Any antidepressant	MAOI	Reduce agent gradually over 2 weeks, if starting at a high dose; then wait 2 weeks before MAOI initiation; a 5-week washout period is required if switching from fluoxetine to an MAOI <sup>a</sup>