

Stopping antidepressants - Information for your pharmacist

Dear Pharmacist,

Thank you for supporting me to stop taking an antidepressant by slowly decreasing the dose (hyperbolic tapering). I need your support to access the mini doses used in tapering.

Antidepressant mini doses are not readily available commercially and so off-label options are needed. These include compounded mini dose capsules via a compounding pharmacist, or liquid formulations where available.

Other options that people sometimes use include cutting or shaving and weighing tablets, or making their own dilute suspensions by crushing and mixing tablets in water. Pharmaceutical guidance advises that antidepressant tablets can be crushed and dispersed in water for administration (eMIMS: <https://app-emimselite-com.ap1.proxy.openathens.net/Drct?id=410> and NHS pharmaceutical guidance: www.sps.nhs.uk/articles/ssri-suggestions-for-adults-with-swallowing-difficulties/).

People should not skip a day or alternate doses as this can result in withdrawal symptoms.

Slow hyperbolic tapering of antidepressant dose can help to minimise antidepressant withdrawal symptoms to enable people to safely and successfully stop taking antidepressants. Stopping antidepressants can be difficult for some people, especially those at higher risk of withdrawal symptoms such as those who have been taking antidepressants for longer than 12 months or who are taking a higher risk antidepressant such as venlafaxine or paroxetine.

Hyperbolic tapering is recommended in clinical guidelines for stopping antidepressants: (see the Maudsley Deprescribing Guidelines and www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/treatments-and-wellbeing/stopping-antidepressants). Hyperbolic tapering involves decreasing antidepressant dose in smaller decreases at lower doses (At lower, go slower). For example, 100mg–50mg–25mg–12.5mg–9mg–6mg–4mg–2mg–1mg–STOP, with dose reductions every 2-4 weeks. Small drug doses can have disproportionately large effects, hence the need for hyperbolic tapering.

Further information: www.releasetoolkit.com.au

Kind regards,

Patient (supported by the RELEASE team)

Further information is available at: www.releasetoolkit.com.au and medical-school.uq.edu.au/release

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