

The Side Effects of Anxiety Medications

All anxiety medications come with [potential side effects](#). The side effects of anxiety drugs, also called anxiolytics, include sleepiness, fatigue, and a slowing of mental functioning. Depending on their class, these medications may also be habit-forming or even addictive. Taking anxiety medications isn't necessarily a case of the lesser of two evils. They can help level out panic attacks and reduce anxiety attacks to a manageable level. Some can produce lasting relief, while others shouldn't be used for more than the short-term.

What Are Common Classes of Anxiety Medications?

If you're exploring how to find the right anxiety medication, it's important to learn all you can about them and why they're given. Physicians prescribe fast-acting anxiety medications to reduce either the immediate effects of an anxiety attack or to work over the long term to reduce day to day anxiety that's uncomfortable but doesn't rise to the urgency of a panic attack or anxiety attack. Some of the most common include Valium and Xanax.

Four major classes of medications are used in the treatment of anxiety disorders. They include [benzodiazepines](#), [Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors](#), [Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors \(SSRIs\)](#), and tricyclic antidepressants. The side effects of anti-anxiety drugs vary from class to class. They also differ from medication to medication within each class.

Benzodiazepines. Most people have heard of at least some of the medications in this class. These anxiety drugs became common in the 1960s and are still given today. The difference between benzodiazepines and antidepressant medication for anxiety is that benzos work within minutes to hours. Other classes of medications can take days to several weeks to become effective.

Benzodiazepines are used for the short-term treatment of anxiety. They are not antidepressants and work only to produce relaxation, promote sleep and reduce anxiety. Long-term use causes habituation, in which a person requires ever-increasing dosages of the medication to achieve the same results as a lower dose. Benzodiazepines are habit-forming, may cause physical dependence and have the potential to be addictive.

Benzodiazepines are fast-acting anti-anxiety medications that include:

- Restoril, Normison (temazepam). Temazepam is given to treat insomnia and starts working within 30 minutes. Temazepam is also given for the management of panic attacks.
- Valium (diazepam). Diazepam is a fast-acting benzodiazepine. Valium is given for sleep and anxiety and for withdrawal caused by alcohol and other addictive substances. Its effects range from 1 to 3 days.
- Xanax (alprazolam). Alprazolam is a fast-acting anxiety medication and lasts from 12 to 20 hours. Alprazolam is given for the immediate relief of panic attacks and anxiety attacks that are underway.

- Klonopin (clonazepam). Clonazepam's effects begin within an hour and can last from 12 hours to a day.
- Temesta, Ativan (lorazepam). Ativan begins to work within 1 hour and lasts as long as 8 hours. It's given for anxiety disorder and the relief of anxiety symptoms over the short-term. Lorazepam is given for anxiety associated with depression and stress-associated insomnia.

Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs). The [SNRI](#) class increases norepinephrine and serotonin, two important neurotransmitters. SNRIs are given for anxiety and depression and may cause side effects may occur. SNRI side effects can include upset stomach, insomnia, sexual dysfunction, headache or a small increase in blood pressure. SNRIs are effective for long-term treatment for anxiety disorders. SNRI brand names include Effexor (venlafaxine), Effexor XR (extended-release), Pristiq (desvenlafaxine), Cymbalta (duloxetine), Savella (milnacipran), and Fetzima (levomilnacipran)

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). SSRIs help depression and anxiety by allowing serotonin to remain active longer in the brain. Higher serotonin levels improve mood and reduce anxiety by increasing levels of the brain chemical GABA. GABA (gamma-amino butyric acid) prompts feelings of well-being and calmness. SSRI brand names include Zoloft (sertraline), fluoxetine (Prozac), Celexa (citalopram), Lexapro (escitalopram), Paxil (paroxetine) and Luvox (fluvoxamine). SSRI side effects include nausea, sleep problems, problems having sex, tremors and in some cases nervousness.

Tricyclic Antidepressants. Tricyclic antidepressants include amitriptyline, imipramine, and nortriptyline. They're effective for some anxiety disorders, like Generalized Anxiety Disorder, but not others. They can cause serious side effects, including dry mouth, blurry vision, urinary retention, constipation and orthostatic hypotension (low blood pressure on rising).

Common Anti-Anxiety Medication Side Effects.

All anti-anxiety medications have side effects. Of the classes of anti-anxiety medications, only benzodiazepines are fast-acting. However, benzodiazepines also carry a risk for abuse and addiction. Benzodiazepines are effective over the short term, less than 4 weeks. All classes of anti-anxiety medications require a doctor's guidance to stop, as abruptly quitting these medications after taking them for a week or longer can cause severe, even temporarily [debilitating side-effects](#).

Benzodiazepine side effects

Restoril (temazepam, Normison) side effects. Restoril, also called Normison is given for insomnia caused by anxiety or stress. Taking Restoril for anxiety alone is rarely suggested due to excessive daytime sleepiness. For that reason, temazepam for daytime anxiety isn't recommended. Temazepam side effects include dry mouth, nausea, muscle weakness, confusion and irritability. Restoril is powerful and has a high potential of abuse.

Valium (diazepam) side effects. Diazepam is a fast-acting benzodiazepine. Valium is given for sleep and anxiety and for withdrawal caused by alcohol and other addictive substances. Its effects range from 1 to 3 days.

Xanax (alprazolam) side effects. Alprazolam is a fast-acting anxiety medication and lasts from 12 to 20 hours. Alprazolam is given for the immediate relief of panic attacks and anxiety attacks that are underway.

Klonopin (clonazepam) side effects. Clonazepam's effects begin within an hour and can last from 12 hours to a day.

Temesta. Temesta's side-effects include drowsiness, hyperactivity, nausea, fainting and skin rashes. Temesta can cause memory impairment.

Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRI) Side Effects

SNRI [side effects](#) can include upset stomach, insomnia, sexual dysfunction, headache or a small increase in blood pressure. SNRIs can take days to weeks to start working, so they are not effective for a panic attack or anxiety attack that is underway. They work to prevent anxiety attacks from happening at all.

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI) Side Effects

SSRI [side effects](#) include nausea, sleep problems, problems having sex, tremors and in some cases nervousness. Like SNRIs, SSRIs do not work instantly. Once they have reached a therapeutic level in a person's body, they can prevent uncomfortable levels of anxiety arising.

Tricyclic Antidepressant Side Effects

Tricyclic antidepressants may cause serious side effects, including dry mouth, blurry vision, urinary retention, constipation and orthostatic hypotension (low blood pressure on rising).

If you want to beat anxiety and you're concerned about the many side effects of antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications, consider NeuroSpa TMS in Tampa, Florida. NeuroSpa TMS offers treatment for anxiety via Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), an FDA cleared non-invasive treatment for mental health disorders. NeuroSpa TMS uses targeted magnetic pulses to stimulate areas of the brain that affect mood, which helps you get back to your best life quickly and with no side effects. Among the many anxiety treatment options out there, TMS therapy is an excellent, pain-free solution that is covered by most insurance. Learn more at <https://www.neurospatms.com/>.

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