

Fluoxetine

Prozac

An SSRI that stays in the body for weeks. Benefits build gradually, and interactions can linger too.

From Jeffrey Panko, PMHNP-BC's education collection ·

Draft for review · Clinical content has not been revalidated for this website.

Check daily versus weekly form

Follow your product-specific prescription

Diagram: 5-HT_{2C} contribution is uncertain; a clinically meaningful NET effect remains unresolved.

What it is used for

Used for depression, OCD, panic disorder and bulimia. Some products are also labeled for severe premenstrual mood symptoms (PMDD).

For bipolar depression and certain treatment-resistant depression regimens, it is used with olanzapine, not alone. Children's approved uses and doses differ.

How it works

Fluoxetine slows the reuptake of serotonin, a chemical messenger between brain cells. Changes over time are thought to help mood and other symptoms.

It is not an instant mood boost. Your prescriber checks benefit, side effects and daily functioning before deciding whether a dose change makes sense.

What to expect over time

EARLY DAYS

Nausea, jitteriness or sleep changes may appear before benefit. Report severe restlessness rather than waiting it out.

OVER SEVERAL WEEKS

Improvement is gradual. Full benefit may take 4–5 weeks or longer; OCD may need a longer trial.

AFTER DOSE CHANGES

Levels change slowly. Keep follow-up visits and do not raise, stop or restart doses on your own.

Taking your medication

Follow your exact prescription. Daily doses are usually taken in the morning; some are split morning/noon. Food may help nausea.

Weekly 90 mg capsules are not daily doses or a routine starting treatment. Swallow delayed-release capsules whole; do not crush, cut or chew.

Measure prescribed liquid with an oral syringe. Avoid alcohol. Do not drive or use machinery until you know how fluoxetine affects you.

When to get help

Call promptly: worsening mood, suicidal thoughts, severe agitation or little sleep with unusual energy. Immediate danger: 911; U.S. crisis support: 988.

Emergency care: fever with confusion, sweating and stiff or twitching muscles; seizure, collapse, severe allergy or trouble breathing.

Urgent assessment: unusual bleeding, eye pain, vision changes, palpitations, confusion, weakness or unsteadiness. Severe symptoms need emergency care.

Early side effects

Nausea, diarrhea, headache, sweating, tremor, dry mouth or sleep changes may occur. Tell your team if symptoms persist or interfere with daily life.

Other effects to discuss

Sexual problems, emotional flattening and appetite or weight changes can occur. Tell your prescriber; feeling flat does not automatically mean the dose is too high.

What to keep track of

Track mood, sleep, appetite, weight and side effects. Follow growth in children and glucose in diabetes. Sodium tests or an ECG depend on your risks and symptoms. Close mood checks matter at every age, especially through age 24 and after dose changes.

Before you start

Tell your prescriber about bipolar symptoms, seizures, bleeding, low sodium, glaucoma risk, diabetes, liver disease, heart-rhythm problems, pregnancy or breastfeeding. Depression approval starts at age 8 and OCD at age 7; other uses and combination products have separate rules. Share all medicines and supplements, including anything recently stopped.

Medicines & interactions

MAOIs, linezolid & IV methylene blue

Do not combine. Wait at least 5 weeks after fluoxetine before an antidepressant MAOI, and at least 14 days after an MAOI before fluoxetine. Urgent antibiotic/dye use needs clinician management.

Pimozide & thioridazine

Do not combine because of serious heart-rhythm risk. Thioridazine also needs at least 5 weeks after fluoxetine is stopped.

Other serotonin medicines

Check tramadol, triptans, antidepressants, dextromethorphan cough products and St. John's wort. Serotonin toxicity can be serious. Avoid duplicate fluoxetine products.

Pain relievers & blood thinners

Ibuprofen, naproxen, aspirin and anticoagulants add bleeding risk. Ask before starting pain medicines; do not stop prescribed blood thinners yourself.

Tamoxifen & other prescriptions

Fluoxetine may reduce tamoxifen's activation and alter levels of some heart, psychiatric and sedative medicines. Coordinate with your prescribers; interactions can last for weeks after stopping.

Everyday tips

Use a reminder and take the prescribed schedule consistently.

Keep therapy, regular sleep and activity in your treatment plan.

Tell every doctor, dentist and pharmacist about recent fluoxetine use.

Speak up about side effects instead of quietly changing the dose.

Your questions, answered

What if I miss a dose?

For daily treatment, take it when remembered unless the next dose is near; then skip it. Never double. For weekly capsules, ask your pharmacist how to reset the schedule.

Is it easy to stop?

Withdrawal is less frequent than with shorter-acting SSRIs, but it can occur later. Plan a gradual reduction when appropriate; do not assume it tapers itself safely.

What about pregnancy or breastfeeding?

Discuss benefits and risks rather than stopping on your own. If breastfeeding, ask about watching the baby's feeding, alertness, irritability and weight gain.

What if I take too much?

Call Poison Help at 1-800-222-1222 promptly, even if you feel well. Collapse, seizure, trouble breathing or inability to wake: call 911.

Storage & safety

Keep tightly closed at room temperature, away from light, heat and moisture. Store securely away from children and pets, never share, and ask a pharmacist about take-back disposal.

A final reminder

Read your product's Medication Guide.

About this information

For general information only; not a substitute for individualized medical advice. This sheet does not cover every risk or interaction. Ask your prescriber or pharmacist before changing how you take this medication.

Sources

1. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/medguide.cfm?setid=23899405-007b-48d9-82a9-a530b8e90784>
 2. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a689006.html>
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Educational inclusion does not mean this medication or its indications are treated at this practice. Review the guide for your exact product with your prescriber or pharmacist.

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