

A Guide To Selection Of Antidepressants

Drug	Recommended outpatient dose for a depressive episode ¹	Cost for 30 days treatment ²	Side effect profile			Other adverse effects	Contraindications	Precautions
			sedative	anticholinergic	postural			
Tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs)								
Amitriptyline	150 mg	\$28.98	+++	+++	++	(Apply to all TCAs) Excessive sweating, carbohydrate craving, weight gain, insomnia, delirium, sexual dysfunction, ECG changes	Acute MI	(Apply to all TCAs) Cardiovascular disorders, hepatic impairment, hyperthyroidism, epilepsy, suicidal tendencies, prostatic hypertrophy, narrow angle glaucoma or increased intraocular pressure, schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorder (mania), MAOIs, abrupt withdrawal
Clomipramine	100 mg	\$69.88	++	++	+			
Desipramine	150 mg	\$160.23	+	+	+ / ++			
Dothiepin	150 mg	\$16.94	+++	++	++			
Doxepin	150 mg	\$15.17	+++	++	++			
Imipramine	150 mg	\$25.77	++	++	++			
Nortriptyline	150 mg	\$23.27	+	+ / ++	+ / -			
Trimipramine	150 mg	\$19.67	+++	++	++			
Selective serotonin re-uptake inhibitors (SSRIs)								
Fluoxetine	20 mg	\$64.39 ³	+ / -	+ / -	+ / -	Insomnia, nausea, weight loss, rash, sexual dysfunction, hyponatraemia.	MAOIs Hypersensitivity to Paroxetine	Significant agitation, severe hepatic or renal impairment, mania, cardiac disease
Paroxetine	20 mg	\$69.85 ³	+ / -	+ / -	+ / -			
Atypical cyclic agents								
Amoxapine	300 mg	\$60.80	+	+	+	Gynaecomastia, cardiotoxicity, extrapyramidal effects	Acute MI	Similar to the tricyclic antidepressants
Maprotiline	150 mg	\$78.55	++	+ / -	+	Seizures, cardiotoxicity, rash	Epilepsy, acute MI, conduction disorders, narrow angle glaucoma, urine retention, MAOIs	Similar to the tricyclic antidepressants
Mianserin	60 mg	\$80.73	++	+ / -	+	Hepatic dysfunction, blood dyscrasias	Mania, MAOIs	Bipolar depressive illness, narrow angle glaucoma, prostatic hypertrophy
Reversible MOA-A inhibitor (RIMA)								
Moclobemide	450 mg	\$99.36	+ / -	+ / -	+	Anxiety, headache, nausea, rash	Hypersensitivity to Moclobemide, acute confusional states, children.	Large quantities of tyramine-rich foods , thyrotoxicosis, phaeochromocytoma, excitation or agitation, bipolar affective disorder, cimetidine, pethidine
Monooamine oxidase inhibitors⁴								
Phenelzine	60 mg	\$49.35	+ / -	+ / -	++	Insomnia, sexual dysfunction, agitation, hepatic dysfunction	Phaeochromocytoma, cerebrovascular or cardiovascular disease, sympathomimetics, pethidine, SSRIs, TCAs	Require low tyramine diets , epilepsy, liver disease, elderly, surgery, interactions with other medications, bipolar affective disorder (mania)
Tranylcypromine	30 mg	\$56.97	+ / -	+ / -	++			

Key:
 + / - = rare or negligible
 + = uncommon or mild
 ++ = common or moderate
 +++ = frequent or severe
 SR = specialist recommendation required
 HP = hospital pharmacy only
 SA = available on special authority

Footnotes
 1 Due to wide variation in metabolism and clinical response, doses need to be individually titrated.
 2 Cost to person (and any subsidy) using the recommended dose rates in the previous column.
 3 The difference in the price between Fluoxetine and Paroxetine is because there is a common price per dose (rather than per mg). Prices quoted reflect the higher (on average) dose of Fluoxetine prescribed in New Zealand, as it is also indicated for other disorders at a higher dose.
 4 MAOIs may cause constipation, dry mouth, urinary difficulty by other than an anticholinergic mechanism.

Adapted from 'Antidepressant Drugs: A Guide to Selection' New Ethicals, 1994.