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PSYCHIATRY

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PATIENT EDUCATION

Paroxetine

Paxil / Paxil CR / Brisdelle / Generic formulations

A guide for adults taking paroxetine.
Follow the directions on your prescription and your provider's recommendations.

TAKE THE PRESCRIBED FORMULATION CONSISTENTLY

DO NOT SWITCH OR COMBINE BRANDS YOURSELF

Formulations: Immediate-release tablets, controlled-release tablets, liquid, and low-dose capsules differ in dosing and indications. Follow your exact formulation.

What it is used for

Paroxetine treats depression and several anxiety-related conditions, including panic disorder, social anxiety, generalized anxiety, OCD, PTSD, and PMDD, depending on the formulation. Low-dose Brisdelle is for menopausal hot flashes, not psychiatric treatment.

How it works

It slows serotonin reuptake. Changes in signaling begin early, while improvement in mood or anxiety usually develops over weeks.

What to expect over time

Sleep, energy, or appetite may change before mood improves. Benefit usually builds over several weeks; some conditions need a longer trial at a useful dose.

Track the symptoms you are treating and how you manage daily activities. Keep follow-up appointments. Schedule an earlier appointment if your mood gets worse.

Taking your medication

- Take at the prescribed time; standard psychiatric formulations are commonly taken in the morning. Discuss timing if sleepy or unable to sleep.
- Swallow controlled-release tablets whole. Shake liquid and measure accurately.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless it is almost time for the next dose. Then skip it. Do not double a dose.
- Avoid abrupt stopping. Paroxetine can cause substantial withdrawal symptoms, so reductions should be individualized.

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Side effects and safety

Possible side effects

- Nausea, constipation, or dry mouth
- Drowsiness, sweating, or dizziness
- Sexual side effects
- Weight gain with ongoing treatment

Keeping track of treatment

Some side effects resolve with time; others may require a change of medication. Discuss persistent or bothersome side effects with your provider.

Antidepressants can increase suicidal thoughts in people under 25. Watch for changes in mood or behavior at any age, especially when starting treatment or changing a dose.

Tell your provider about emotional numbness, unusual agitation, or a reduced need for sleep with increased energy. These changes may call for a treatment adjustment.

Report unusual bruising or bleeding, severe headache, confusion, or marked weakness. SSRIs can increase bleeding risk and sometimes lower blood sodium.

If you take too much

For a suspected overdose, call Poison Control at **1-800-222-1222** immediately, even if you feel well. Call 911 for a seizure, collapse, trouble breathing, or inability to wake.

Before you start

Discuss any history of mania or bipolar disorder, seizures, heart disease, glaucoma, and kidney or liver problems.

Discuss pregnancy, pregnancy plans, and breastfeeding with your provider. Treatment decisions should consider both the medication and the condition being treated.

Discuss pregnancy plans before changes whenever possible; paroxetine has particular pregnancy considerations. Do not suddenly stop needed treatment.

Medicines and interactions

Review all your medications with your provider, including over-the-counter medicines and supplements. Have new medications checked before taking them.

Paroxetine strongly inhibits CYP2D6 and can interfere with tamoxifen or raise levels of other medicines.

Do not combine with MAOIs, pimozide, or thioridazine. Other serotonergic medicines increase serotonin-syndrome risk; NSAIDs and anticoagulants add bleeding risk.

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Living with your treatment

When to get help

Emergency symptoms. Get emergency care for a seizure, severe allergic reaction, or sudden eye pain with vision changes. Fever with agitation, diarrhea, and stiff or twitching muscles may be serotonin syndrome and needs urgent assessment.

Prompt medical advice. Contact your provider right away for marked agitation, new hallucinations, or unusually high energy with very little need for sleep.

If you feel unsafe or have thoughts of self-harm, call 911 or go to an emergency department.

Your questions answered

Can I stop when I feel better?
Consult with your provider. Continuing treatment after improvement can reduce the chance that symptoms return. Most antidepressants should be reduced gradually to limit withdrawal symptoms.

What if I have sexual side effects?
Changes in desire, arousal, or orgasm are worth discussing. Your provider can review the dose or treatment options; do not stop or skip doses on your own.

Everyday tips

A regular dose time and refill reminder can help prevent missed doses.

Bring a few specific observations to appointments: sleep, motivation, anxiety, and activities that have become easier or harder.

Storage and safety

Keep medication in its labeled container, away from excess heat and moisture and out of reach of children and pets. Do not share it. Ask a pharmacy about disposal of unused medication.

Sources

Official prescribing information: paroxetine

MedlinePlus: paroxetine

Educational handout; does not replace your prescription or provider's recommendations.