

# COMMON MEDICATIONS AND SIDE EFFECTS

## MODULE NINE

Prescription medication can be a form of treatment for someone diagnosed with a mental disorder. While many are effective at helping people, some medications can have significant side effects. Thus, even if you refer an individual to treatment, there is always the chance the treatment may not be effective or may need to be altered to find a medication that works to reduce symptoms without causing extreme side effects. Observing someone who is experiencing substantial side effects may signal the need to alert mental health staff. Here are some examples of medications for mental disorders and their potential side effects.



### Antidepressants

These are medications often used to treat depression. Fluoxetine, Citalopram, Sertraline, Paroxetine, Escitalopram, Bupropion, Venlafaxine, and Duloxetine, and MAOIs (monoamine oxidase inhibitors) are popular anti-depressants. Some side effects can include nausea and vomiting, diarrhea, and sleepiness.

### Anti-Anxiety Medications

These are medications often used to treat and help reduce the symptoms of anxiety, such as panic attacks, extreme fear, and worry. The most common anti-anxiety medications are benzodiazepines; some specific ones are Clonazepam, Alprazolam, and Lorazepam. Some side effects of these medications include: drowsiness and dizziness, nausea, blurred vision, headache, confusion, and nightmares.

### Antipsychotic Medications

These medications are often used to manage psychosis that can be related to bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, or drug abuse. These medications can also be used to treat major depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, and generalized anxiety disorders. Some names of these medications include: Chlorpromazine, Haloperidol, Risperidone, Seroquel, Quetiapine and Lurasidone. Some side effects of these medications can include: drowsiness, restlessness, weight gain, dry mouth, constipation, nausea, vomiting, blurred vision, low blood pressure, and uncontrollable movements (e.g., tics, tremors, and seizures).

## Mood stabilizers

These medications are commonly used to help treat bipolar disorder and mood swings associated with certain mental disorders, and can also be used in conjunction with other treatments to help treat depression. Lithium is a mood stabilizer. Some side effects include itching, rash, excessive thirst, frequent urination, shaky hands, nausea and vomiting, slurred speech, irregular heartbeat, blackouts, changes in vision, seizures, hallucinations, loss of coordination, and swelling of the face or limbs (NIH, 2016b).

