



POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

August 2021

What are antidepressants?

Antidepressants, particularly selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), have been found to be efficacious in the treatment of depression and anxiety. PTSD was originally classed as an anxiety disorder. Antidepressants may work for PTSD by correcting imbalances in neurotransmitters thought to play a role in causing and/or maintaining symptoms.

What is the evidence on antidepressants for PTSD?

Moderate quality evidence found the antidepressants phenelzine (large effect), desipramine (medium-sized effect), paroxetine, venlafaxine, fluoxetine, and sertraline (all small effects) were more effective for PTSD symptoms than placebo. Phenelzine was more effective for PTSD symptoms than the antidepressants citalopram, bupropion, sertraline, and imipramine. Phenelzine was also more effective than the anticonvulsants divalproex and tiagabine, the alpha blocker prazosin, and the adrenergic receptor agonist guanfacine. Paroxetine and desipramine were more effective for PTSD symptoms than citalopram, divalproex, and prazosin. Venlafaxine and fluoxetine were more effective for PTSD symptoms than citalopram and prazosin. Citalopram was less effective for PTSD symptoms than the antidepressant mirtazapine and the antipsychotic olanzapine. There were fewer dropouts due to adverse events with the antidepressant brofaromine than with the antidepressants sertraline and paroxetine, and the anticonvulsant topiramate.

Moderate to low quality evidence found no differences between paroxetine or sertraline plus prolonged exposure vs. paroxetine, sertraline, or prolonged exposure alone. Moderate quality evidence found no differences in PTSD relapse rates after discontinuation of antidepressants or placebo. Moderate to high quality evidence found no influence of baseline PTSD symptom severity on efficacy of paroxetine and sertraline after 12 weeks of treatment.

For more information see the technical table



NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about PTSD and its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at neura.edu.au/donate