



# The Clay Center for Young Healthy Minds

*Shining light on mental health through education.*

## What to Know About SSRIs

When does a doctor decide to prescribe medication for a mental health disorder? For most doctors, there are three thresholds for prescribing medication:

- When a child is impaired functionally
- When a child is really struggling
- When a child is really suffering

SSRI stands for “**selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor**” and includes any class of antidepressant that is thought to act by blocking the uptake of serotonin in the central nervous system.

Below is more information on SSRIs, a class of medications used to treat depression, anxiety, panic disorder, and several other mental health conditions.

### Types of SSRIs

1. **Citalopram (Celexa)**. Often used to treat major depressive disorder by increasing the amount of serotonin in the brain to elevate mood.
2. **Escitalopram (Lexapro)**. Often used to treat anxiety and major depressive disorder in adults and adolescents over the age of 12.
3. **Fluoxetine (Prozac, Selfemra, Sarafem)**. Used for a variety of disorders, such as: depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), bulimia and other eating disorders, and panic disorders such as agoraphobia (severe fear of being in crowds or public places).
4. **Fluvoxamine (Faverine, Luvox)**. Often used to treat OCD.
5. **Sertraline (Zoloft)**. Used in the treatments of a variety of emotional disorders: major depressive disorder, premenstrual dysphoric disorder, OCD, and panic disorder.
6. **Proxetine (Paxil)**. Used to relieve a variety of emotional problems such as: depression, OCD, panic disorder, generalized anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

### Common Side Effects

- Drowsiness or dizziness
- Dry mouth
- Abnormal dreams
- Weight changes
- Mild nausea
- Abnormal sexual function

### Questions to Ask the Prescribing Doctor

- Why are they prescribing this type of SSRI?
- What side effects should my child be expecting, and which side effects should be cause for concern?
- Are there other medications we should avoid while on a SSRI?

### Monitoring for Signs of Concern

- Anyone who becomes agitated on antidepressants should call their doctor immediately (parents should be told to monitor any changes in behavior)
- The manic flip (associated with rarer cases of pediatric bipolar disorder) can also look more euphoric and less agitated. This is also cause to urgently contact your doctor.

**Thanks for all you do to support a young person in your life. It really makes a difference.**

*For more resources on depression and other disorders, visit us online: [mghclaycenter.org](http://mghclaycenter.org)*