

Desipramine

Norpramin, an older antidepressant, the most alerting one in its family

Desipramine treats depression and nerve pain, and it is the least sedating choice among the older antidepressants.

WHAT IT TREATS

Depression, nerve pain

HOW YOU TAKE IT

By mouth, usually in the day

WHEN IT WORKS

2-4 weeks; fuller by 6

HABIT FORMING

No

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Antidepressants can bring on new or worse thoughts of suicide, most often in people under **25** and in the first weeks. Anyone taking it should be watched closely for a darkening mood, and should call or text **988** if those thoughts start.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Desipramine** mostly raises norepinephrine, a brain chemical tied to energy, focus, and how alert you feel.
- It is chosen when other medicines in this family leave you too foggy, because it is the least sedating of the group.
- It also quiets pain nerves that fire too easily, so it is sometimes used for burning or shooting nerve pain.
- It is not a stimulant and it is not habit forming. It builds its effect quietly over weeks of steady daily use.

⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take **desipramine** at the same time every day. Morning often works best, since it can make sleep harder at night.
- You can take it with or without food. A snack alongside it settles a stomach that feels unsettled at first.
- Swallow the tablet whole with a full glass of water. Do not crush or chew it unless your pharmacist says you may.
- If you miss a dose and the next one is close, skip the one you missed. Taking two together is never the fix.
- Keep it in its bottle, up high or locked away. It is dangerous in **overdose**, so safe storage protects your household.

🔧 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Energy and concentration often pick up first, sometimes within **1 to 2 weeks**, before your mood really shifts.
- Give it **4 to 6 weeks** at a steady amount before deciding with your prescriber whether it is doing enough.
- Your prescriber may check a blood level, since this medicine works best inside a certain range in the body.
- Working looks like waking with a bit more drive, handling ordinary tasks again, and less weight in your chest.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Dry mouth: sip water through the day, chew sugar-free gum, and keep dental visits, since a dry mouth invites cavities.
- Constipation: more water, more fruit and whole grains, daily walking, and a gentle stool softener if you still need one.
- Drowsiness or, more often, trouble sleeping: ask your prescriber about shifting the time of day rather than skipping.
- Dizziness when you stand: rise in two stages, sit up first and pause, then stand while holding something steady.
- A faster heartbeat or jittery feeling: cutting back on coffee and energy drinks usually makes a clear difference.
- Blurry close-up vision or dry eyes: this often eases in a few weeks, and lubricating eye drops help meanwhile.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- New or worse thoughts of suicide: call or text **988** now, and tell your prescriber the same day.
- Chest pain, fainting, or a heart that races or skips beats means call **911** right away.
- If anyone takes too much of this, call **911** at once. An **overdose** can harm the heart within hours.
- Not being able to pass urine, or sudden confusion, needs a same-day call to your prescriber.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Skip alcohol while you take **desipramine**. Together they can leave you unsteady and can strain your heart.
- Do not drive or use machinery until you know how it affects you, especially in the first couple of weeks.
- Tell every prescriber and pharmacist, since it clashes with some antidepressants, cold remedies, and heart medicines.
- Take care in hot weather. This medicine makes sweating harder, so drink water and take shade breaks often.
- If you are pregnant, nursing, or hoping to be, bring it up early so you and your prescriber can weigh it together.

⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop on your own. Feeling steady is usually a sign the medicine is working rather than a sign to quit.
- Stopping suddenly can bring headache, nausea, chills, vivid dreams, and a restless feeling for several days.
- Your prescriber will lower it in small steps over **2 to 4 weeks** or longer, which prevents nearly all of that.
- If a side effect is what bothers you, say so. There are other choices, and any switch is planned in advance.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Should I take this in the morning or at night for my sleep?
- Do I need a heart tracing or blood level checks with this?
- How long should I stay on it once I start feeling better?
- Where should I keep this bottle so no one else can get to it?

Where this information comes from

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NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.