

Fluoxetine

Prozac, Prozac Weekly, Sarafem, Symbyax (with olanzapine), an antidepressant called an SSRI

Fluoxetine steadies your mood over time, so depression, worry, or stuck thoughts stop running your day.

WHAT IT TREATS

Depression, OCD, panic

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Once daily, morning, any food

WHEN IT WORKS

1-2 weeks; fuller by 6-8

HABIT FORMING

No

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Antidepressants can raise the risk of suicidal thoughts in people under **25**, mostly in the first weeks or after a dose change. Tell someone right away and call your prescriber. Do not stop the medicine on your own.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Fluoxetine** is an antidepressant. It helps your brain hold on to serotonin, a chemical that steadies mood, worry, and appetite.
- It is used for depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic attacks, bulimia, and severe premenstrual mood changes.
- It is not a happy pill and it will not change who you are. It treats an illness, the same way blood pressure medicine does.
- It is not habit forming. You do not crave it, and it is not something you take only on the days you feel bad.

🕒 HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it once a day, usually in the morning. It can feel a little energizing, so a morning dose is less likely to keep you up.
- You can take it with or without food. If it bothers your stomach, take it with breakfast or a snack instead.
- Swallow capsules and tablets whole. If you use the liquid, measure it with the marked syringe or cup, not a kitchen spoon.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember that same day. If it is nearly time for the next one, skip it. Never double up.
- Store it at room temperature, away from heat and damp. A bedroom drawer keeps better than a steamy bathroom cabinet.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Sleep, appetite, and energy often improve first, in about **1 to 2 weeks**. Mood and interest usually lift a few weeks later.
- Give it **4 to 6 weeks** at a steady dose before you judge it. The fullest benefit can take up to 8 to 12 weeks.
- Side effects often arrive before the benefit does. That gap is the single most common reason people quit too early.
- Working looks ordinary. You sleep, you eat, small problems stop feeling huge. Many people only notice it looking back.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Nausea is common in the first week or two. Taking it with food and eating smaller, plainer meals usually settles it.
- Trouble sleeping or a jittery feeling can happen early. A morning dose helps, and it often fades in a couple of weeks.
- Headache is common at first. Water, rest, and a plain pain reliever your pharmacist approves usually handle it.
- Sexual side effects are common: less desire, trouble reaching orgasm, or less sensation. Say so, because there are real fixes.
- Sweating, dry mouth, or a fine tremor in your hands can show up. Water, sugar-free gum, and less caffeine all help.
- Your appetite may dip at first and a little weight may come off. Over months, weight usually settles near where it started.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- New or worse thoughts of suicide, especially early or after a dose change: call or text **988** now and tell someone today.
- Call **911** for agitation with fever, stiff muscles, a racing heart, or twitching. That can mean too much serotonin.
- Call your prescriber for new confusion, bad headache, or unsteadiness, especially in an older adult. Salt levels are fixable.
- Call your prescriber if you feel wired, cannot sleep for days, or bruise and bleed more easily than usual.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Skip alcohol, especially at the start. It works against the medicine and makes sleep and low mood worse.
- Ask before any new medicine, herb, or supplement. St. John's wort, tramadol, and migraine triptans are the big ones.
- Ask before regular ibuprofen, naproxen, or aspirin. With **fluoxetine** they raise your chance of stomach bleeding.
- Hold off on driving or power tools until you know how it hits you. Most people are steady again within a week or two.
- Tell your prescriber if you are pregnant, nursing, or thinking about it. That is a choice to weigh together, not alone.

⏸️ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Never stop on your own, even when you feel great. Feeling well is the medicine working, not proof you are finished with it.
- **Fluoxetine** clears the body slowly, so stopping causes fewer withdrawal-type symptoms than most antidepressants.
- Most people stay on it at least **6 to 12 months** after they feel well. Stopping early is the top reason symptoms return.
- If you run out or miss several days in a row, call your prescriber or pharmacist instead of restarting on your own.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How long should I give this before we decide whether it is working?
- What can we try if the sexual side effects do not go away on their own?
- Which pain relievers and cold medicines are safe for me to use now?
- Who do I call after hours if I start feeling worse instead of better?

Where this information comes from

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. (2025). *Talk to someone now*. <https://988lifeline.org/>

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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.