

Phenelzine

Nardil, an older antidepressant that comes with food rules

Phenelzine often works when other antidepressants have not, as long as you follow its food and medicine rules every day.

WHAT IT TREATS

Depression, anxiety

HOW YOU TAKE IT

By mouth, spread over the day

WHEN IT WORKS

2-4 weeks; fuller by 6

FOOD RULES

Yes, strict and daily

⚠️ 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

- **Phenelzine** blocks the enzyme that breaks down your mood chemicals, so more of them stay available in your brain.
- It often helps when several other antidepressants have not, especially when depression comes with heavy anxiety.
- That same enzyme clears a food chemical called tyramine, which is why what you eat becomes part of the treatment.
- The rules look long at first, but they come down to a short list of foods and a habit of asking before you buy.

⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take **phenelzine** at the times your prescriber set, usually spread through the day rather than all at once.
- Start the food rules on the day you start the medicine, and keep them for **2 weeks** after your very last dose.
- Carry a card or a note on your phone naming this medicine, so anyone treating you in an emergency knows at once.
- If you miss a dose, take it when you remember unless the next one is close. Never take two doses together.
- Store it at room temperature in its own bottle, away from heat, and out of reach of children and pets.

🔧 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Mood usually begins to lift in **2 to 4 weeks**, with the fullest effect closer to **6 weeks** of steady use.
- Many people who got nowhere with other antidepressants do respond to this one, which is why it is still prescribed.
- Your prescriber will check your blood pressure at visits and may ask you to check it at home as well.
- Working looks like waking with less dread, wanting to see people again, and having the energy to follow through.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Dizziness when you stand: rise in two stages, drink plenty of water, and add a little salt if your prescriber agrees.
- Trouble sleeping: this medicine can be activating, so ask about moving your last dose of the day earlier.
- Weight gain and swollen ankles: regular meals, daily walking, and putting your feet up in the evening all help.
- Dry mouth: sip water often, chew sugar-free gum, and keep up dental visits so your teeth stay protected.
- Sexual side effects such as delayed climax: common with this medicine and worth raising, since there are options.
- Tingling in your hands or feet: ask your prescriber about vitamin B6, which often fixes this exact problem.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- A sudden pounding headache, a stiff neck, or chest pain means call **911**. Your blood pressure may be spiking.
- Sudden blurred vision, a racing heart, or heavy sweating and nausea after a meal is also a **911** call.
- New or worse thoughts of suicide: call or text **988** now, and tell your prescriber the same day.
- Fever with stiff muscles, shivering, and confusion needs an ER visit rather than a phone call.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Skip aged cheeses like cheddar, blue, and parmesan. Fresh ones such as cottage, ricotta, and cream cheese are fine.
- Skip cured and fermented meats: salami, pepperoni, summer sausage, and any meat that has sat around in the fridge.
- Skip tap beer and unpasteurized beer, soy sauce, miso, Marmite, sauerkraut, kimchi, and fava beans.
- Many cold, cough, and allergy medicines can spike your blood pressure. Ask the pharmacist before you buy anything.
- Some antidepressants and pain medicines are dangerous with this, so every prescriber and pharmacist must know.

⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop on your own. Your prescriber will lower it in steps, because a sudden stop can leave you very unwell.
- Keep the food rules for a full **2 weeks** after your last dose. The enzyme takes that long to come back.
- Stopping fast can cause anxiety, bad dreams, and a jittery, wired feeling that lasts for several days.
- Any new antidepressant has to wait until that **2 week** gap is done, and your prescriber will time it for you.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Can I have the full food list in writing to keep on my fridge?
- Which cold and allergy medicines are safe for me to buy?
- Should I check my blood pressure at home, and how often?
- What should an emergency team know if I cannot tell them?

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.