

Selegiline (Transdermal)

Emsam, an antidepressant you wear as a skin patch

The selegiline patch treats depression through your skin, and at its lowest strength it does not need the usual food rules.

WHAT IT TREATS

Depression

HOW YOU TAKE IT

One skin patch, changed daily

WHEN IT WORKS

2-4 weeks; fuller by 6

FOOD RULES

Only at higher strengths

⚠️ 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 using the patch should be watched closely for a darkening mood, and should call or text **988** if those thoughts start.

① WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- The **selegiline** patch blocks the enzyme that breaks down your mood chemicals, so more of them stay working.
- Going through the skin lets it skip your stomach, where that same enzyme protects you from a food chemical called tyramine.
- That is why the **lowest strength** patch needs no special diet, while the higher strengths do need the food rules.
- It is a steady, all-day medicine. You wear one patch at a time and swap it for a fresh one every day.

⌚ HOW TO TAKE IT

- Put a new patch on once a day, at about the same hour, on clean dry skin that has no cuts, rash, or lotion.
- Use the upper chest, upper back, upper thigh, or the outside of your upper arm, and press it down for **30 seconds**.
- Rotate to a different spot each day so your skin gets a rest, and never wear two patches at the same time.
- If a patch falls off, put on a fresh one and keep your usual change time. Do not try to stick the old one back.
- Fold used patches sticky side together and throw them away where children and pets cannot reach them.

🔪 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Mood usually starts to lift in **2 to 4 weeks**, and the fullest effect tends to arrive by about **6 weeks**.
- Some redness or itching where the patch sat is common and usually mild. Rotating the spot each day helps most.
- Sleep may get lighter early on, since this medicine is somewhat energizing rather than sedating.
- Working looks like more energy in the morning, more interest in people, and less of a weight on your chest.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Skin irritation under the patch: rotate sites daily, and ask your pharmacist about a fragrance-free moisturizer nearby.
- Trouble sleeping: apply the patch in the morning if your prescriber agrees, and keep caffeine to the early part of the day.
- Headache in the first week or two: usually mild, and it often settles with water, rest, and plain acetaminophen.
- Dry mouth: sip water through the day, chew sugar-free gum, and keep up regular dental visits.
- Dizziness when you stand: rise in two stages, sit up first and pause, then stand while holding something steady.
- Stomach upset or loose stools: this usually eases within a couple of weeks as your body gets used to the medicine.

⚠️ 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.
- 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.
- A blistering rash or badly swollen skin under the patch needs a same-day call to your prescriber.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Keep heat away from the patch. No heating pads, electric blankets, hot tubs, saunas, or long sunbathing on that spot.
- On the **higher strengths**, avoid aged cheeses, cured meats, tap beer, soy sauce, Marmite, and sauerkraut.
- Ask your pharmacist before buying any cold, cough, or allergy medicine, since several can spike your blood pressure.
- Some antidepressants and pain medicines are dangerous with this, so every prescriber and pharmacist must know.
- Skip alcohol, and be careful driving until you know how the patch affects your alertness during the day.

⌚ STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop on your own. Your prescriber will lower the strength in steps rather than having you pull it off.
- If you were on a **higher strength**, keep the food rules for **2 weeks** after your last patch comes off.
- Stopping suddenly can cause anxiety, bad dreams, and a jittery feeling that lasts for several days.
- Any new antidepressant has to wait out that same **2 week** gap, and your prescriber will time it for you.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Which strength am I on, and does it need the food rules?
- Where on my body should I place the patch this week?
- Which cold and allergy medicines are safe for me to buy?
- What should I do if the patch keeps falling off in the shower?

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.