

## *MAOI Antidepressants*

This leaflet will help you know about

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### *What Are They For?*

MAOI antidepressants are used to treat the symptoms of depression such as low mood, loss of energy, loss of pleasure, tearfulness and feelings of despair or guilt.

### *When Will They Work?*

It may take two weeks or longer to feel some improvement, so do not feel discouraged if the effects are not immediate.

### *How Much Do I Need?*

You will start with a low dose and this may be gradually changed to find the right amount. Tell your doctor how you feel at each visit as this will help to work out the right amount.

### *What Happens if I Miss a Dose?*

If you forget to take a dose at the normal time, take it when you remember. If it is nearly time for the next dose, then just take the normal amount. Do not take a double dose.

### *How Long Do I Need to Take Them?*

MAOI antidepressants are not addictive. Your doctor will discuss the likely benefits of taking them and how long the treatment may last. If you have had depression before, you will need to remain on medication longer. Feeling well does not mean that you can stop taking the tablets. It means that the tablets are keeping you well. Talk to your doctor before you stop taking the tablets.

### *Warnings*

It is important to avoid some foods, drinks and medicines while on MAOIs because this can result in a dangerous increase in blood pressure. This applies for at least two weeks after you stop taking this medication.

**At the first sign of a severe headache, go to a hospital immediately.**

### *Taking Other Medicines*

Do not take other medicines before consulting a doctor or pharmacist.

Cough and cold cures, such as drops and sprays, and appetite suppressants (diet pills) can cause a dangerous reaction with MAOIs.

### *Food*

Make sure you have a diet sheet if you have been prescribed MAOIs. This will outline the foods that must be avoided.

These include:

- Cheeses—including cheese spreads and sauces.
- Meat and yeast extracts such as Vegemite, Marmite, Promite and Bonox.
- Smoked or fermented meats or fish.
- Some alcoholic beverages.

**If you have any unpleasant reactions at all, see a doctor immediately.**

### *What Else Should I Tell My Doctor?*

- If you experience suicidal thoughts, which can be common in depression. Always tell your doctor how you are feeling.
- If you start to lose interest in sex or have other sexual problems.
- (For women) If you miss a period, think you may be pregnant or you intend getting pregnant.

### *What About Side Effects?*

You may get side effects before you start to feel better. They can often be helped by adjusting your medication or by other methods. Do not stop taking your medication abruptly, but talk to your doctor or pharmacist about any concerns you have.

If you experience any side effects, report them to your doctor.

### **Common side effects include:**

- Restlessness
- Trembling
- Weakness
- Dizziness
- Weight gain.

### **Uncommon side effects include:**

- Rash or itchy skin
- Headache
- Dark urine
- Swollen ankles
- Yellow eyes or skin (jaundice)
- Mood swing from depression to mania.

Should you experience any of these uncommon side effects while taking MAOIs, you need to contact your doctor urgently.

### ***What Else Should I Be Careful With?***

- Driving a car or operating machinery—your reactions may be slower.
- Alcohol, which may make you more dizzy or sleepier than usual.
- Before undergoing any type of surgery or emergency treatment, tell a doctor or dentist that you take these medicines or have used them in the past two weeks.

**Always tell any other doctor, pharmacist or dentist you may visit that you take these medicines. Some medicines can react with others, even those you may buy without a prescription.**

### ***Note to Health Professionals:***

This leaflet should not replace verbal counselling. In particular, this leaflet is **not** a substitute for informed consent. This leaflet provides information for patients taking MAOI antidepressants. Reference to any drug or substance does not necessarily imply recommendation by the Victorian Department of Human Services for its use.

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# **MAOI Antidepressants Information for Patients**

