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2. Escitalopram

# Escitalopram

**Pronunciation:** *EE-sye-TAL-o-pram*

**Generic name:** escitalopram

**Brand name:** [Lexapro](#)

**Drug class:** [Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors](#)

Medically reviewed by [Philip Thornton, DipPharm](#). Last updated on Dec 2, 2024.

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## What is escitalopram?

[Escitalopram](#) is an antidepressant belonging to a group of drugs called [selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors \(SSRIs\)](#). It affects chemicals in the brain that may be unbalanced in people with depression or anxiety.

Escitalopram is used to treat [major depressive disorder](#) in adults and adolescents at least 12 years old.

Escitalopram is also used to treat [anxiety](#) in adults.

## Warnings

You should not use escitalopram if you also take [pimozide](#) or [citalopram \(Celexa\)](#).

Do not use escitalopram within 14 days before or 14 days after you have used an MAO inhibitor, such as [isocarboxazid](#), [linezolid](#), [methylene blue](#) injection, [phenelzine](#), [rasagiline](#), [selegiline](#), or [tranylcypromine](#).

Some young people have thoughts about suicide when first taking an antidepressant. Stay alert to changes in your mood or symptoms. Report any new or worsening symptoms to your doctor.

**Seek medical attention right away if you have symptoms of serotonin syndrome, such as:** [agitation](#), hallucinations, fever, sweating, shivering, [fast heart rate](#), muscle stiffness, twitching, loss of coordination, [nausea](#), [vomiting](#), or [diarrhea](#).

**Do not stop using escitalopram without first asking your doctor.**

## Before taking this medicine

You should not use this medicine if you are allergic to escitalopram or citalopram (Celexa), or if:

- you also take pimozide.

Do not use escitalopram within 14 days before or 14 days after you have used an MAO inhibitor. A dangerous drug

interaction could occur. MAO inhibitors include isocarboxazid, linezolid, phenelzine, rasagiline, selegiline, and tranylcypromine.

Be sure your doctor knows if you also take stimulant medicine, opioid medicine, [herbal products](#), or medicine for [depression](#), mental illness, [Parkinson's disease](#), [migraine](#) headaches, serious infections, or prevention of [nausea and vomiting](#). These medicines may interact with escitalopram and cause a serious condition called serotonin syndrome.

To make sure escitalopram is safe for you, tell your doctor if you have ever had:

- liver or kidney disease;
- [seizures](#);
- low levels of sodium in your blood;
- heart disease, [high blood pressure](#);
- a stroke;
- bleeding problems;
- sexual problems;
- [bipolar disorder](#) (manic depression); or
- [drug addiction](#) or suicidal thoughts.

Some young people have thoughts about suicide when first taking an antidepressant. Your doctor should check your progress at regular visits. Your family or other caregivers should also be alert to changes in your mood or symptoms.

Escitalopram is not approved for use by anyone younger than 12 years old.

Ask your doctor about taking this medicine **if you are pregnant**. Taking an SSRI antidepressant during late pregnancy may cause serious medical complications in the baby. However, you may have a relapse of depression if you stop taking your antidepressant. Tell your doctor right away if you become pregnant. **Do not start or stop taking this medicine without your doctor's advice.**

If you are pregnant, your name may be listed on a pregnancy registry to track the effects of escitalopram on the baby.

If you are breastfeeding, tell your doctor if you notice drowsiness, agitation, feeding problems, or poor weight gain in the nursing baby.

 [Escitalopram pregnancy and breastfeeding warnings](#) (more detail)

## How should I take escitalopram?

Take escitalopram exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Follow all directions on your prescription label and read all medication guides or instruction sheets. Your doctor may occasionally change your dose.

Take escitalopram at the same time each day, with or without food.

Measure liquid medicine carefully. Use the dosing syringe provided, or use a medicine dose-measuring device (not a kitchen spoon).

It may take up to 4 weeks before your symptoms improve. Keep using the medication as directed and tell your doctor if your symptoms do not improve.

**Tell your doctor if you have any changes in sexual function**, such as loss of interest in sex, trouble having an orgasm, or (in men) problems with erections or ejaculation. Some sexual problems can be treated.

Your doctor will need to check your progress on a regular basis. A child taking escitalopram should be checked for height and weight gain.

Do not stop using escitalopram suddenly, or you could have unpleasant withdrawal symptoms. Follow your doctor's instructions about tapering your dose.

Store escitalopram at room temperature away from moisture and heat.

 [Escitalopram patient tips](#) (more detail)

## Dosing information

### Usual Adult Dose for Generalized Anxiety Disorder:

Initial dose: 10 mg orally once a day; increase if necessary after at least 1 week of treatment to 20 mg once a day

Maintenance dose: 10 to 20 mg orally once a day

Maximum dose: 20 mg orally once a day

Comment: Treatment should be periodically reassessed to determine the need for ongoing treatment; efficacy beyond 8 weeks has not been systematically studied.

Use: Acute treatment of generalized anxiety disorder

### Usual Adult Dose for Depression:

Initial dose: 10 mg orally once a day; increase if necessary after at least 1 week of treatment to 20 mg once a day

Maintenance dose: 10 to 20 mg orally once a day

Maximum dose: 20 mg orally once a day

Comments:

-Acute episodes may require several months or longer of sustained pharmacological therapy beyond response to the acute episode.

-Patients should be periodically reassessed to determine the need for maintenance treatment.

Use: Acute and maintenance treatment of major depressive disorder

### Usual Geriatric Dose for Depression:

Recommended dose: 10 mg orally once a day

Use: Acute and maintenance treatment of major depressive disorder

### Usual Pediatric Dose for Depression:

12 years and older:

-Initial dose: 10 mg orally once a day; increase if necessary after at least 3 weeks of treatment to 20 mg once a day

-Maintenance dose: 10 to 20 mg orally once a day

-Maximum dose: 20 mg orally once a day

#### Comments:

-Acute episodes may require several months or longer of sustained pharmacological therapy beyond response to the acute episode.

-Patients should be periodically reassessed to determine the need for maintenance treatment.

Use: Acute and maintenance treatment of major depressive disorder

 [Detailed Escitalopram dosage information](#)

## What happens if I miss a dose?

Take the medicine as soon as you can, but skip the missed dose if it is almost time for your next dose. Do not take two doses at one time.

## What happens if I overdose?

Seek emergency medical attention or call the Poison Help line at 1-800-222-1222.

## What to avoid

Ask your doctor before taking a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as [aspirin](#), [ibuprofen \(Advil, Motrin\)](#), [naproxen \(Aleve\)](#), [celecoxib \(Celebrex\)](#), [diclofenac](#), [indomethacin](#), [meloxicam](#), and others. Using an NSAID with escitalopram may cause you to bruise or bleed easily.

Avoid alcohol.

Avoid driving or hazardous activity until you know how escitalopram will affect you. Your reactions could be impaired.

## Escitalopram side effects

Get emergency medical help if you have **signs of an allergic reaction to escitalopram**: [skin rash](#) or [hives](#); difficulty breathing; swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat.

Report any new or worsening symptoms to your doctor, such as: mood or behavior changes, anxiety, [panic attacks](#), trouble sleeping, or if you feel impulsive, irritable, agitated, hostile, aggressive, restless, hyperactive (mentally or physically), more depressed, or have thoughts about suicide or hurting yourself.

Call your doctor at once if you have:

- blurred vision, tunnel vision, eye pain or swelling, or seeing halos around lights;
- racing thoughts, unusual risk-taking behavior, feelings of extreme happiness or sadness;
- pain or burning when you urinate;
- (in a child taking escitalopram) slow growth or weight gain;
- **low levels of sodium in the body** - [headache](#), confusion, slurred speech, severe weakness, vomiting, loss of coordination, feeling unsteady; or

- **severe nervous system reaction** - very stiff (rigid) muscles, high fever, sweating, confusion, fast or uneven heartbeats, tremors, feeling like you might pass out.

**Seek medical attention right away if you have symptoms of serotonin syndrome, such as:** agitation, hallucinations, fever, sweating, shivering, fast heart rate, muscle stiffness, twitching, loss of coordination, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.

Common escitalopram side effects may include:

- painful urination;
- [dizziness](#), drowsiness, tiredness, weakness;
- feeling anxious or agitated;
- increased muscle movements, feeling shaky;
- sleep problems ([insomnia](#));
- sweating, dry mouth, increased thirst, loss of appetite;
- nausea, [constipation](#);
- yawning;
- nosebleed, heavy menstrual periods; or
- decreased sex drive, [impotence](#), or difficulty having an orgasm.

This is not a complete list of side effects and others may occur. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You may report side effects to FDA at 1-800-FDA-1088.

 [Escitalopram side effects](#) (more detail)

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## What other drugs will affect escitalopram?

Using escitalopram with other drugs that make you drowsy can worsen this effect. Ask your doctor before using opioid medication, a sleeping pill, a muscle relaxer, or medicine for anxiety or seizures.

Tell your doctor about all your current medicines, especially a blood thinner such as [warfarin](#), [Coumadin](#), or [Jantoven](#).

Many drugs may interact with escitalopram, and some drugs should not be used at the same time. Tell your doctor about all your current medicines and any medicine you start or stop using. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines, [vitamins](#), and [herbal products](#). Not all possible interactions are listed here.

 [Escitalopram drug interactions](#) (more detail)

## Does escitalopram interact with my other drugs?

Enter medications to view a detailed interaction report using our [Drug Interaction Checker](#).

escitalopram

+

Enter a drug name

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## Further information

Remember, keep this and all other medicines out of the reach of children, never share your medicines with others, and use escitalopram only for the indication prescribed.

Always consult your healthcare provider to ensure the information displayed on this page applies to your personal circumstances.

DRUG STATUS

<b>Availability</b>		
Rx	Prescription only	
<b>Pregnancy &amp; Lactation</b>		
	Risk data available	
<b>CSA Schedule*</b>		
N/A	Not a controlled drug	▼
<b>Approval History</b>		
	Drug history at FDA	▼

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7.5 / 10

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