

Serotonin Syndrome Facts

If you have obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) and are taking medications that increase serotonin in your brain, such as fluoxetine (Prozac), sertraline (Zoloft), or clomipramine, it's important to know about **serotonin syndrome**. This is a rare but serious condition that can happen when there is too much serotonin in your body, especially if you are taking higher doses or more than one medicine that affects serotonin.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

What is serotonin syndrome?

Serotonin syndrome happens when your body has too much serotonin, a chemical that helps regulate mood, sleep, and other functions. It can occur if you take high doses of serotonergic medicines, combine them with other drugs that affect serotonin, or start a new medicine that interacts with your current treatment.[\[3\]](#)[\[6\]](#)

What are the symptoms?

Watch for these signs, especially if your dose has recently increased or you started a new medicine:

- **Mental changes:** Feeling confused, restless, agitated, seeing things that aren't there (hallucinations), or feeling very sleepy.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)
- **Body changes:** Fast heartbeat, high or changing blood pressure, dizziness, sweating, flushing (redness), or feeling very hot.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)
- **Muscle changes:** Shaking, stiff muscles, twitching, trouble with coordination, or jerky movements.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)
- **Stomach problems:** Nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)[\[6\]](#)
- **Severe symptoms:** Seizures, very high fever, or passing out.[\[6\]](#)

What should you do?

If you notice any of these symptoms, especially if they start suddenly or get worse quickly, **get medical help right away**. Serotonin syndrome can be life-threatening if not treated quickly.[\[3\]](#)[\[6\]](#)

How can you lower your risk?

- Always tell your doctor about all medicines, supplements, or herbal products you are taking, including St. John's Wort, triptans (for migraines), or certain pain medicines.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)
- Do not change your dose or start new medicines without talking to your doctor.
- If you need to stop your medicine, do so only as directed by your doctor.[\[1\]](#)

Why is this important for OCD?

Sometimes, treating OCD requires higher doses of serotonergic medicines than for other conditions. This can increase your risk for serotonin syndrome, so it's important to know the signs and act quickly if you feel unwell.[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)[\[3\]](#)[\[4\]](#)[\[5\]](#)

Remember: Serotonin syndrome is rare, but knowing what to look for can help keep you safe. If you have any questions or concerns, talk to your healthcare provider.

References

1. [FLUOXETINE](#). Food and Drug Administration. Updated date: 2024-08-09.
2. [sertraline hydrochloride](#). Food and Drug Administration. Updated date: 2025-08-06.
3. [Serotonin Syndrome-a Focused Review](#). Mikkelsen N, Damkier P, Pedersen SA. Basic & Clinical Pharmacology & Toxicology. 2023;133(2):124-129. doi:10.1111/bcpt.13912.
4. [Fluoxetine HCl](#). Food and Drug Administration. Updated date: 2024-05-01.
5. [CLOMIPRAMINE HYDROCHLORIDE](#). Food and Drug Administration. Updated date: 2024-11-26.
6. [The Serotonin Syndrome](#). Boyer EW, Shannon M. The New England Journal of Medicine. 2005;352(11):1112-20. doi:10.1056/NEJMra041867.