

How long does it take to work? A question Australians are asking about their medicines

Questions about how long it takes for antidepressants to work and for any side effects to improve are commonly answered by pharmacists who staff Medicines Line, a free telephone information service delivered by NPS MedicineWise.

Over 70,000 questions from the general public about a variety of medicines have been answered since 2010. Callers often asked about antidepressants, accounting for around 7% of calls to the service – with 72% of enquiries about medicine interactions and 58% about side effects.

“A common question about antidepressants is about how long it takes for them to start working,” says Nerida Packham, pharmacist and Medicines Line Team Lead at NPS MedicineWise.

“When treating depression, these medicines can take 1–2 weeks to start working and it may take 6 weeks to feel their full effect. For anxiety, a response is usually seen within 4–6 weeks and continues to improve with time,” says Ms Packham.

“Side effects are common, and we can reassure callers that these may often go away with time, but we always recommend that they go back to their prescribing doctor if they have any concerns or feel the medicine is not right for them.

“We are also frequently asked about pain medicines, reflux medicines and complementary medicines, and we’re able to give people more information about how to safely take these medicines, how the medicines work in their bodies, and when they should seek face-to-face medical advice,” she says.

The Medicines Line team also offers an online ‘Ask A Pharmacist’ service through the NPS MedicineWise Facebook page, which is available at www.facebook.com/npsmedicinewise.

People can post their questions about medicines as Facebook ‘comments’ and a pharmacist will respond as soon as possible, usually the same day, during office hours Monday–Friday 9am–5pm AEDT (excluding public holidays).

Find out more

NPS MedicineWise offers a range of [information for the general public](#) in response to common questions people have about medicines, and a [free smart phone app](#) to help you keep track of your medicines.

For more information on prescription, over-the-counter and complementary medicines (herbal, ‘natural’, vitamins and minerals) from a health professional, call [Medicines Line](#) on 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424) for the cost of a local call (calls from mobiles may cost more). Hours of operation are Monday–Friday 9am–5pm AEDT (excluding public holidays).

ENDS

Spokespeople are available for media interviews.

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