

Lexapro

Drug Name -- Lexapro

Alternate Names – Escitalopram [Lexapro is a derivative of citalopram (Celexa)]

Manufacturer – Forest Pharmaceuticals

Type – Prescription (Not Controlled). **FDA Black Box Warning** – Increased suicide risk for some age groups (at a minimum).

Pregnancy Issues – FDA Pregnancy Category C. No substantial research has been conducted and it must be assumed that Lexapro is transplacental and may cause damage to the fetus or birth defects. Lexapro may cause serious or life-threatening lung problems in newborn babies whose mothers take the medication during pregnancy. Lexapro can pass into breast milk and may harm a nursing baby.

Addiction Potential – It is not conclusive that Lexapro is psychologically addicting. It does, however, result in tolerance issues over time. The drug should not be abruptly discontinued. Consult a doctor prior to stopping Lexapro. Some researchers have indicated that there may be withdrawal symptoms when Lexapro is discontinued (this is especially true in cases of abrupt cessation).

Maximum Prescription Duration – This is a long-term prescription that usually does not take full effect for at least four weeks. Over time, the patient may experience a diminishing effect of the drug and may need to consult a medical doctor about switching to another SSRI antidepressant. The switching process is complex and demands that the patient titrate off of Lexapro over time and then resume on another SSRI antidepressant after a two-week break between drugs. Patients may experience heightened symptoms during this process.

Cautions – Lexapro may increase suicidal ideations or suicide attempts for at least the first 12 weeks that it is taken. It may cause mood or behavior changes, anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia, impulsiveness, irritability, agitation, hostility, aggressiveness, restlessness, hyperactivity, or increased depression. Do not take if you have liver or kidney disease, seizures or epilepsy, Bipolar I Disorder (Lexapro may interact negatively with a manic or hypomanic condition), or a history of suicide attempts or suicidal ideations. [This list of cautions is not complete.]

Drug Interactions/Adverse effects – Avoid all use of alcohol or other CNS depressants while taking Lexapro. Do not take with an MAOI such as Marplan, Nardil, Azilect, Eldepryl, Emsam, or Parnate. This drug interaction can be fatal. Do not take with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) including Advil, Motrin, Aleve, Naprosyn, Voltaren, Feldene, Relafen, Lodine, and any other NSAIDs. Carbatrol and Tegretol; Tagamet; Lithium; blood thinners such as Coumadin; other SSRI antidepressants such as (but not limited to) Elavil, Celexa, Prozac, Sarafem, Luvox, Tofranil, Pamelor, Paxil, or Zoloft. Lexapro may also interact with Axert, Frova, Imitrex, Amerge, Maxalt, or Zomig. [This is not a complete list of drug interactions.]

Class – SSRI antidepressant; **FDA Black Box Warning** (see above).

Purpose – Major Depressive Disorder; Generalized Anxiety Disorder.

Side Effects – Lexapro may impair your thinking or reasoning abilities. Lexapro may induce mania or manic/hypomanic episodes. Allergic reactions including skin rash or hives, difficulty breathing, swelling of the face, lips, tongue, or throat; significant mood or behavior changes, anxiety, panic attacks, insomnia, impulsiveness, irritability, agitation, hostility, aggressiveness, restlessness, hyperactivity, worsening depression, or suicidal ideations. Lexapro may also cause very rigid muscles, high fever, sweating, fast or uneven heartbeats, tremors, overactive reflexes; nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, feeling unsteady, loss of coordination; or headache, trouble concentrating, memory problems, weakness, confusion, hallucinations, fainting, seizure, shallow breathing or breathing that stops. [This is not a complete list of side effects.]

Withdrawals – Aggression, extreme anxiety, blurred vision, concentration impairment, constipation, crying spells and increased emotionality, depersonalization, diarrhea, dizziness, fatigue, flatulence, flu-like symptoms, hallucinations, hostility, indigestion, irritability, impaired speech, insomnia, lack of coordination, lethargy, migraine headaches, nausea, nervousness, paranoia, akathasia, stomach cramps, tremors, tinnitus, tingling sensations, disturbing thoughts, hallucinations, vivid dreams, and deepening depression.

Sources – Lexapro.com, drugs.com, blackboxrx.com, psyweb.com, psychdrugtruth.com