
Medications Used to Treat Mental Health Conditions Common in Autism

You can work with your healthcare or mental health provider to find the right medication for your child or youth. There are several different “families” of medications used to treat many of the mental health conditions which occur along with autism. These include:

- **Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)**

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/selective-serotonin-reuptake-inhibitors-ssris-information>

- This group of antidepressants treats some problems that result from imbalances in the body's chemical systems.
- SSRIs might reduce the frequency and intensity of repetitive behaviors; decrease anxiety, irritability, tantrums, and aggressive behavior; and improve eye contact.

- **Tricyclics**

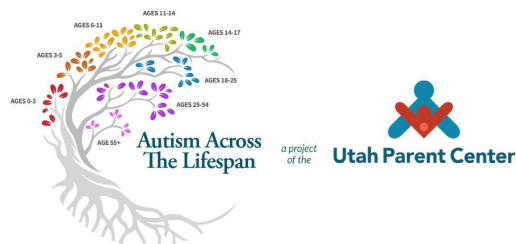
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/antidepressants/art-20046983>

- These medications are another type of antidepressant used to treat depression and obsessive-compulsive behaviors.
- These drugs seem to cause more minor side effects than do SSRIs. They are sometimes more effective than SSRIs for treating certain people and certain symptoms.

- **Psychoactive or antipsychotic medications**

https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications/#part_149866

- These types of medications affect the brain of the person taking them. The antipsychotic drug risperidone is approved for reducing irritability in 5-to-16-year-olds with autism.
- These medications can decrease hyperactivity, reduce stereotyped behaviors, and minimize withdrawal and aggression among people with autism.





- **Stimulants**

<https://childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-adhd-medications/>

- This group of medications can help to increase focus and decrease hyperactivity in people with autism. They are particularly helpful for those with mild ASD symptoms.

- **Anti-anxiety medications**

<https://www.healthline.com/health/anxiety-drugs#benzodiazepines>

- This group of medications can help relieve anxiety and panic disorders, which are often associated with ASD.

- **Anticonvulsants**

<https://www.cms.gov/Medicare-Medicaid-Coordination/Fraud-Prevention/Medicaid-Integrity-Education/Pharmacy-Education-Materials/Downloads/ac-adult-fact-sheet11-14.pdf>

- These medications treat seizures and seizure disorders, such as epilepsy. (Seizures are attacks of jerking or staring and seeming frozen.)
- Almost one-third of people with autism symptoms have seizures or seizure disorders.

Healthcare providers and families should work together for the effective use of medication to manage some of the mental health symptoms of autism. It is common for families to try more than one medication before they find the right fit. Some medications have serious risks associated with them so be sure to ask questions and look for information to be educated about possible side effects so you can feel comfortable before use.

Reference:

- National Institute of Children's Health and Development

<https://www.nichd.nih.gov/health/topics/autism/conditioninfo/treatments/medication-treatment>