EP EMBRACE PSYCHIATRY
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Side Effect Tracker: Antidepressants

A weekly worksheet — complete it and bring it to every visit

What this is: Antidepressants are medications that help balance brain chemicals involved in mood, sleep, appetite, and anxiety. They are used for depression and for several anxiety disorders. Examples include Zoloft, Lexapro, Prozac, and Wellbutrin. This worksheet helps you and your care team track side effects while your body adjusts — and keep an eye on the things that matter most.

How to use this tracker: Each evening, rate each item for that day: **0** = not at all, **1** = a little, **2** = quite a bit, **3** = very much. The first 1–2 weeks are when side effects are most common; many of them fade. Bring the completed sheet to every visit.

Name: _____ **Week of:** _____ **Medication & dose:** _____

Part 1 — Daily Side Effect Ratings (0–3)

Side effect to watch for	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Nausea or upset stomach							
Headache							
Sleep changes (trouble sleeping, or sleeping more than usual)							
Dry mouth							
Sweating more than usual							
Jittery, wired, or "activated" feeling (common in the first days)							
Sexual side effects (lower interest, trouble with arousal or orgasm)							

Part 2 — Daily Context

Each day, record:	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Medication taken? (Y / N)							
Time of dose							
Overall mood (1 = very low, 5 = great)							
Anxiety level (1 = calm, 5 = severe)							

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In crisis? Call or text 988, or text HOME to 741741.

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Hours of sleep last night							
Notes (alcohol, other meds, big events, anything unusual)							

⚠ Warnings — call right away (do not wait for your visit)

- **Thoughts of harming yourself, or feeling much worse instead of better** — especially in the first weeks. The FDA warns that antidepressants can increase suicidal thoughts in children, teens, and young adults. Call your prescriber immediately, or call or text **988**.
- **Serotonin syndrome** (rare but serious): confusion, agitation, sweating, shivering, muscle twitching or stiffness, fast heartbeat. Get medical help right away.
- Signs of mania: suddenly needing almost no sleep, feeling extremely wired or euphoric, racing thoughts, risky behavior.
- Rash, hives, or swelling of the face or throat.

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Part 3 — Using Your Medication Safely

Give it 4–6 weeks

Antidepressants do not work the first day. Most people notice small improvements in 1–2 weeks and the full benefit in 4–6 weeks. Do not give up early — track what you notice on this sheet and talk it over with your prescriber.

Do NOT stop abruptly

Stopping suddenly can cause discontinuation symptoms: dizziness, nausea, "brain zaps," anxiety, and vivid dreams. If you want to stop, your prescriber will taper the dose down gradually. Never adjust the dose on your own.

If you miss a dose

Take it when you remember, unless it is almost time for your next dose. **Never take two doses at once** to make up for a missed one.

Alcohol and other medications

Alcohol can worsen depression and anxiety and increase side effects — it is best to avoid it while starting or adjusting treatment. Tell your prescriber about every other medication and supplement you take, since some combinations are unsafe.

When to call the office

- Side effects are moderate (2s or 3s) for more than two weeks, or are getting worse
- Nausea is keeping you from eating, or you are vomiting
- Sexual side effects are distressing — there are usually options to address this
- You feel worse instead of better after starting the medication
- You are unsure whether what you are feeling is a side effect or a symptom

My notes for the next visit:

Patient signature: _____ **Date:** _____ **Reviewed by:** _____

A note on honesty: There are no "good" or "bad" scores here. Side effects that go unreported cannot be fixed; a side effect you are embarrassed to mention (like sexual side effects) is something your prescriber hears about every day and can often solve. The most useful tracker is an honest one.

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Please read: This handout is for education only and is not medical advice. Do not start, stop, or change any medication without talking to your prescriber. If you are in crisis, call or text **988** (Suicide and Crisis Lifeline) or text **HOME** to **741741**.

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