

## Citalopram (say: sit-al-o-pram)



### What is citalopram?

- Citalopram is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of depression (to reduce the time it takes to recover and help stop the symptoms coming back), anxiety, and OCD
- It can also help social anxiety, PTSD, panic, PMS and seasonal affective disorder
- It is an SSRI (Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor)
- Citalopram is made as tablets and a liquid.

*Please note: Citalopram is mainly used in adults but it is not "licensed" or officially approved for people under 18. This is because it has not been fully studied in younger ages. If you are under 18 you may be offered this medicine because we have experience of it and we know it helps adults. If you wish to know more please ask for a copy of our "Unlicensed uses of licensed medicines" fact sheet.*

### What does citalopram help?

- Citalopram can help many symptoms, including feeling low, nervous, very shy, panicky, or having to do things exactly the right way and checking all the time. In lower doses (e.g. 10mg a day) it can help anxiety, worries and distress
- For depression, about 2 in 3 (65%) of people get better with a first antidepressant
- If that doesn't work or because it has too many side effects, then switching to a second antidepressant helps about half of those people (total of about 75%, or 3 in 4 people)
- There are more options after that e.g. other medicines and therapies.

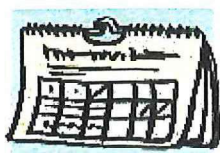


### How and when should I take citalopram?

- Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat
- For the liquid, use the dropper that comes with the bottle. Mix the drops with water, orange juice or apple juice and drink straight away.
- Taking it at breakfast is usually best.

### How long will I have to wait before it works?

- This will depend on what you are taking it for
- For depression the effect usually starts in a week or two, and builds over the few weeks.



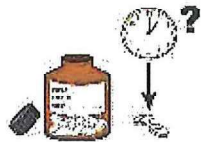
### How long will I need to keep taking citalopram for?

- This will depend on what you are taking it for
- For depression, if an antidepressant has got you better:
  - First episode: Taking it for 6 months reduces the chances of becoming depressed again
  - Second episode: Taking it for 1-2yrs reduces the chances of becoming depressed again.

Been depressed before but antidepressants don't help much? Ever been irritable, disinhibited, overactive, not sleeping, overspent, disinhibited? Bipolar in the family? If so, it's worth asking: "Could it be bipolar?"

### Can I stop taking citalopram suddenly?

- It is best not to do this. Talk it over first with other people e.g. relatives and your prescriber or other healthcare professional
- It normally works out better if you stop medication in a planned way at a time when your stress levels are low, rather than e.g. around exam times, mid-winter and life events
- Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after citalopram has been stopped
- You should come off citalopram by a gradual drop in dose over several weeks
- You might also get some discontinuation symptoms such as 'flu-like symptoms, and sleep disturbance (e.g. more vivid dreams). They can start 2-4 days after stopping, usually only last a few weeks (but can be a bit longer) and will go if citalopram is started again.



### What should I do if I forget to take a dose of citalopram at the right time?

- Start again as soon as you remember but not within 5-6 hours of going to bed
- After this, just take the next dose as normal
- Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects.

### Can I cycle or drive while I am taking citalopram?


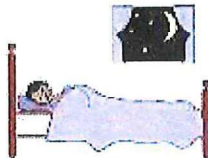

- You may feel a bit light-headed at first when taking citalopram
- Until this wears off, or you know how citalopram affects you, be careful cycling and do not drive or operate machines.









## What sort of side-effects might I get with citalopram?





### Very common (more than about 1 in 10 people might get these)

 <p><b>Feeling sick or being sick, or stomach pain</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking it after food may help</li> <li>• It usually wears off in a few weeks</li> <li>• If not, tell your prescriber.</li> </ul>	<p><b>can't sleep</b></p>  <p><b>Not being able to get to sleep at night</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure you take the dose early in the day</li> <li>• Let your prescriber know as a change in dose may help.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Sex</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding it hard to have an orgasm</li> <li>• No desire for sex</li> <li>• Discuss this with your prescriber.</li> </ul>	

### Common (fewer than about 1 in 10 people might get these)

 <p><b>Headache</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If your head is painful, paracetamol usually helps.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Not feeling hungry</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will usually get your appetite back in a few weeks</li> <li>• If not, let your prescriber know next time you meet.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Diarrhoea</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Going to the toilet more than usual and "having the runs"</li> <li>• Drink plenty of water</li> <li>• Ask your pharmacist for advice</li> <li>• If it lasts for more than a day or so, contact your prescriber.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Feeling more anxious or nervous</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This usually only lasts for a few weeks while you get used to your citalopram</li> <li>• If not, tell your prescriber next time you meet.</li> </ul>

### See your prescriber if you get any of these rare side effects:

 <p><b>Thoughts of harming yourself</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling anxious, restless, poor sleep and feeling you might want to harm yourself</li> <li>• See your doctor in the next day, especially if you are under about 20 years old, started citalopram in the last few weeks, have had a dose change or may have bipolar depression.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Serotonin Syndrome</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You may feel confused, agitated, restless, sweaty, feverish, fast heart beat, twitching, shivering and shaky</li> <li>• It may happen if you have just started, had a dose increase, overdose, or start to take any other medicines</li> <li>• See your doctor in the next few hours if this happens.</li> </ul>
<p><b>rash</b></p>  <p><b>Rash</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This can be a rash or itching seen anywhere on the skin</li> <li>• If this happens, stop taking your SSRI and contact your prescriber in the next day.</li> </ul>	 <p><b>Hyponatremia or "SIADH"</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You do not pass much urine, are tired, confused, muscle cramps and you can get a headache</li> <li>• This can be dangerous so contact your prescriber now.</li> </ul>

This table shows some of the most common side effects and any you might need to take action on. You **must** also see the maker's Patient Information Leaflet for the full list of possible side effects but do not be worried by this. Some side effects are the brain getting used to a medicine and these usually wear off in a few days or weeks. Starting at a lower dose may help. If you think you might have a side effect, you should ask your prescriber, pharmacist or other healthcare professional.

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand more about citalopram. You **must** also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. The 'Handy charts' will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions.

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