

# Switching between antidepressant medications

Before switching between antidepressants, consider:

- **Patient experience and preference may supersede this framework in any scenario**
- There is no single approach to switching antidepressants that can be applied to all patients, and published data on “optimal” switching strategy are scarce.
- Drugs with shorter half-lives will require longer taper periods than drugs with longer half-lives.
- When a MAO-I involved there should be a clear washout period; NO antidepressant should be combined with a MAO-I.

## General approach:

**Medication A:** the medication that is being discontinued

**Medication B:** the new medication being started

- Step 1) Reduce Medication A by a dose increment each week, spending 1 week at the Average Minimum Effective Dose
- Step 2) Overlap 50% Average Minimum Effective Dose Medication A plus 50% Average Minimum Effective Dose Medication B for 1 week
- Step 3) STOP Medication A. Increase Medication B to Average Minimum Effective Dose
- Step 4) Re-evaluate in 4-6 weeks, consider further titration of Medication B**

### Example – Transitioning from Escitalopram 20 mg to Duloxetine

Week 1: Escitalopram 10 mg

Week 2: Escitalopram 5 mg + Duloxetine 30 mg

Week 3: Duloxetine 60 mg

	Dose Increments	Approximate Half-lives (hours)	Avg Minimum Effective Dose	Max dose
<b>Common SSRIs</b>				
Fluoxetine	10-20 mg	144	20 mg	80 mg
Sertraline	25-50 mg	26	100 mg	200 mg
Citalopram	10-20 mg	35	20 mg	40 mg
Escitalopram	5-10 mg	32	10 mg	20 mg
<b>Common SNRIs</b>				
Duloxetine	30 mg	12	60 mg	120 mg
Venlafaxine XR	37.5-75 mg	11	75 mg	225 mg
<b>Common TCAs</b>				
Amitriptyline	25-50 mg	36	50-75 mg	150 mg
Nortriptyline	25-50 mg	51	75 mg	150 mg
Desipramine	25 mg	24	75 mg	300 mg
<b>Other Common Antidepressants</b>				
Mirtazapine	7.5 mg	40	15 mg	45 mg
Bupropion XL	150 mg	21	300 mg	450 mg

You can get this document in other languages, large print, braille or a format you prefer. Contact Oregon Prescription Drug Program, Amanda Parish at 503-383-8142 or email [amanda.b.parish@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:amanda.b.parish@dhsosha.state.or.us). We accept all relay calls or you can dial 711.

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