Medication

All medications can have side effects or unintended effects as part of the way in which they are metabolized in the body. It is very important for anyone taking medication either prescribed or over the counter to be aware of what the medication is intended to treat, how it is to be used, what is to be expected from its use and any warning signs of dangerous side effects. In addition, medications interact with each other and with other substances (in some cases even with food) and such interactions can have severe unintended side effects. If you have any questions or problems concerning your medications you should discuss these issues with your provider or pharmacist. The following is a brief overview of the most commonly used psychotropic medications, links and references are provided for further information.

Prescription Psychotropic Medications: Psychotropic refers to medications whose primary actions are intended to affect the mental state of the patient. These medications can be prescribed in various forms (extended release) and in various strengths. Medications have two names, a generic and a trade name. For example, Prozac is the trade name of the generic drug, fluoxetine. This can be somewhat confusing at times. The medications below will be presented in their more commonly known capitalized trade names. These medications fall into various common classifications including:

I. Anti-Depressants
   A. Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI’s): These medications include Prozac, Zoloft, Paxil, Celexa, and Lexapro. These are currently the most widely prescribed anti-depressive medications and are used to treat the symptoms of depression, anxiety, social phobias, pain control, and other associated disorders.

      1. While these medications are considered relatively safe, they may have unintended side effects for many people including, sexual dysfunction, sleep disturbance, gastric discomfort, and flu-like symptoms.
2. These medications may also be used in conjunction with other medications and for disorders other than depression

B. Tricyclics: These include an older class of anti-depressant medications that are still in wide use. Included in the group are such medications as; Elavil, Norpramin, Tofranil and others.

   1. Common side effects include; dry mouth, dizziness, sedation, headaches, etc.

   2. These medications can also be dangerous when not taken as prescribed, and people using them should be carefully followed by their doctor.

C. Other Anti-depressants: Other newer agents used for the control of depression include medications which work in different ways than those above and include: Effexor, Remeron, Serzone, and Wellbutrin.

   1. Common side effects include; increased appetite, weight gain, sedation, dizziness, and gastric discomfort.

   2. As with other anti-depressant medication, these should be used as prescribed and a doctor should follow persons using them.

D. Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOI’s): This is a different class of anti-depressive medications which work on another neurotransmission system, and include, Nardil and Parnate. These are less commonly used medications because of their complex side effect problems and dietary restrictions.

II. Tranquilizers, Muscle Relaxants, and Anti-Anxiety medications:

A. Benzodiazepines: This class of medications is used for the control of anxiety, sedation, muscle spasm, and convulsions. They include, Ativan, Librium, Valium, Xanax, others.

   1. These medications are highly addictive and interact with alcohol to increase the effects of both.

   2. Persons using these medications should always consult their doctor when increasing or discontinuing use.
B. Others: Also in this category are Atarax, Mebaral, Miltown, and Vistaril.

III. Anticycling Agents: These are medications specifically used to control the wide mood swings associated with Bipolar Disorder, and other disorders in which people experience manic (overactive) episodes. They include Depakote and lithium, with preparations marketed as Eskalith, and Lithobid. They are powerful medications and must be carefully supervised and monitored using laboratory tests.

IV. Sedatives, Hypnotics, and Barbiturates: These are medications used for reducing anxiety, aiding sleep and in the detoxification of addiction. They include; Mebaral (barbiturates), Ativan, Halcion, Valium (benzodiazepines), and Ambien, Sonata, and Phenergan (hypnotics)

Useful Links:

http://my.webmd.com/webmd_today/home/default
http://www.druginfonet.com/
http://www.drugs.com/
http://www.fda.gov/cder/drug/default.htm

Over the Counter Medications (OTC)

There are virtually thousands of substances offered for sale without a prescription, promising everything from the cure for the common cold, to successful weight loss. As with all medications it is very important to remember that no substance is free of effects on the body, some of which may be intended and some unintended. Included in this category are food supplements, vitamins, and other non-prescription medications. For detailed information about various preparations carefully read the labels and consult the following links.

http://my.webmd.com/webmd_today/home/default
http://www.medicinenet.com/medications/focus.htm
http://www.medem.com/medlb/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZJXPZTR7C&sub_cat=1
http://www.fda.gov/fdac/reprints/ots_otc.html
http://www.consumer-health.com/services/cons_take1.htm

http://www.fda.gov/cder/consumerinfo/WhatsRightForYou.htm