PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

# Escitalopram

This information from Lexicomp® explains what you need to know about this medication, including what it's used for, how to take it, its side effects, and when to call your healthcare provider.

## Brand Names: US

Lexapro

## Brand Names: Canada

ACH-Escitalopram; ACT Escitalopram ODT; AG-Escitalopram; APO-Escitalopram; Auro-Escitalopram; BIO-Escitalopram; Cipralex; JAMP-Escitalopram; KYE-Escitalopram; M-Escitalopram; Mar-Escitalopram; MINT-Escitalopram; MYLAN-Escitalopram; NAT-Escitalopram; NRA-Escitalopram; PMS-Escitalopram; PMSC-Escitalopram; RIVA-Escitalopram; SANDOZ Escitalopram; TARO-Escitalopram; TEVA-Escitalopram

**Warning**
**For all patients taking this drug:**

- Drugs like this one have raised the chance of suicidal thoughts or actions in children and young adults. The risk may be greater in people who have had these thoughts or actions in the past. All people who take this drug need to be watched closely. Call the doctor right away if signs like depression, nervousness, restlessness, grouchiness, panic attacks, or changes in mood or actions are new or worse. Call the doctor right away if any thoughts or actions of suicide occur.

**Children:**

- This drug is not approved for use in all children. Talk with the doctor to be sure that this drug is right for your child.

## What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat depression.
- It is used to treat anxiety.
- It may be given to you for other reasons. Talk with the doctor.

## What do I need to tell my doctor BEFORE I take this drug?

- If you are allergic to this drug; any part of this drug; or any other drugs, foods, or substances. Tell your doctor about the allergy and what signs you had.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Citalopram or pimozide.
- If you have taken certain drugs for depression or Parkinson’s disease in the last 14 days. This includes isocarboxazid, phenelzine, tranylcypromine, selegiline, or rasagiline. Very high blood pressure may happen.

This is not a list of all drugs or health problems that interact with this drug.

Tell your doctor and pharmacist about all of your drugs (prescription or OTC, natural products, vitamins) and health problems. You must check to make sure that it is safe for you to take this drug with all of your drugs and health problems. Do not start, stop, or change the dose of any drug without checking with your doctor.

## What are some things I need to know or do while I take this drug?

- Tell all of your health care providers that you take this drug. This includes your doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and dentists.
- Avoid driving and doing other tasks or actions that call for you to be alert until you see how this drug affects you.
- Do not stop taking this drug all of a sudden without calling your doctor. You may have a greater risk of side effects. If you need to stop this drug, you will want to slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor.
- Avoid drinking alcohol while taking this drug.
- Talk with your doctor before you use marijuana, other forms of cannabis, or prescription or OTC drugs that may slow your actions.
- In depression, sleep and appetite may get better soon after starting this drug. Other depression signs may take up to 4 weeks to get better.
- This drug may raise the chance of bleeding. Sometimes, bleeding can be life-threatening. Talk with the doctor.
- This drug can cause low sodium levels. Very low sodium levels can be life-threatening, leading to

seizures, passing out, trouble breathing, or death.

- If you are 65 or older, use this drug with care. You could have more side effects.
- This drug may affect growth in children and teens in some cases. They may need regular growth checks. Talk with the doctor.
- Tell your doctor if you are pregnant, may be pregnant, or plan to get pregnant while taking this drug. You will need to talk about the benefits and risks to you and the baby. Taking this drug in the third trimester of pregnancy may raise your risk of bleeding after delivery and may lead to some health problems in the newborn.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

## What are some side effects that I need to call my doctor about right away?

**WARNING/CAUTION:** Even though it may be rare, some people may have very bad and sometimes deadly side effects when taking a drug. Tell your doctor or get medical help right away if you have any of the following signs or symptoms that may be related to a very bad side effect:

- Signs of an allergic reaction, like rash; hives; itching;

red, swollen, blistered, or peeling skin with or without fever; wheezing; tightness in the chest or throat; trouble breathing, swallowing, or talking; unusual hoarseness; or swelling of the mouth, face, lips, tongue, or throat.

- Signs of low sodium levels like headache, trouble focusing, memory problems, feeling confused, weakness, seizures, or change in balance.
- Signs of bleeding like throwing up or coughing up blood; vomit that looks like coffee grounds; blood in the urine; black, red, or tarry stools; bleeding from the gums; abnormal vaginal bleeding; bruises without a cause or that get bigger; or bleeding you cannot stop.
- Seizures.
- Fever or chills.
- Painful erection (hard penis) or an erection that lasts for longer than 4 hours.
- Sex problems have happened with drugs like this one. This includes lowered interest in sex, trouble having an orgasm, ejaculation problems, or trouble getting or keeping an erection. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor.
- Some people may have a higher chance of eye

problems with this drug. Your doctor may want you to have an eye exam to see if you have a higher chance of these eye problems. Call your doctor right away if you have eye pain, change in eyesight, or swelling or redness in or around the eye.

- A severe and sometimes deadly problem called serotonin syndrome may happen. The risk may be greater if you also take certain other drugs. Call your doctor right away if you have agitation; change in balance; confusion; hallucinations; fever; fast or abnormal heartbeat; flushing; muscle twitching or stiffness; seizures; shivering or shaking; sweating a lot; severe diarrhea, upset stomach, or throwing up; or very bad headache.

**What are some other side effects of this drug?**

All drugs may cause side effects. However, many people have no side effects or only have minor side effects. Call your doctor or get medical help if any of these side effects or any other side effects bother you or do not go away:

- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Upset stomach.
- Diarrhea or constipation.
- Dry mouth.

- Trouble sleeping.
- Sweating a lot.
- Flu-like signs.
- Runny nose.
- Headache.
- Yawning.

These are not all of the side effects that may occur. If you have questions about side effects, call your doctor. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects.

You may report side effects to your national health agency.

You may report side effects to the FDA at 1-800-332-1088. You may also report side effects at https://www.fda.gov/medwatch.

**How is this drug best taken?**

Use this drug as ordered by your doctor. Read all information given to you. Follow all instructions closely.

**All products:**

- Take with or without food.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel

well.

**Oral solution:**

- Measure liquid doses carefully. Use the measuring device that comes with this drug. If there is none, ask the pharmacist for a device to measure this drug.

**What do I do if I miss a dose?**

- Take a missed dose as soon as you think about it.
- If it is close to the time for your next dose, skip the missed dose and go back to your normal time.
- Do not take 2 doses at the same time or extra doses.

**How do I store and/or throw out this drug?**

- Store at room temperature in a dry place. Do not store in a bathroom.
- Keep all drugs in a safe place. Keep all drugs out of the reach of children and pets.
- Throw away unused or expired drugs. Do not flush down a toilet or pour down a drain unless you are told to do so. Check with your pharmacist if you have questions about the best way to throw out drugs. There may be drug take-back programs in your area.

## General drug facts

- If your symptoms or health problems do not get better or if they become worse, call your doctor.
- Do not share your drugs with others and do not take anyone else’s drugs.
- Some drugs may have another patient information leaflet. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with your doctor, nurse, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- This drug comes with an extra patient fact sheet called a Medication Guide. Read it with care. Read it again each time this drug is refilled. If you have any questions about this drug, please talk with the doctor, pharmacist, or other health care provider.
- If you think there has been an overdose, call your poison control center or get medical care right away. Be ready to tell or show what was taken, how much, and when it happened.

## Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT

include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/know/clinical-effectiveness-terms.

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If you have any questions, contact a member of your care team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5 p.m., during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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