Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Venlafaxine

This information from UpToDate® Lexidrug™ 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

Effexor XR

Brand Names: Canada

ACT Venlafaxine XR; APO-Venlafaxine XR; Auro-Venlafaxine XR; Effexor XR; M-Venlafaxine XR; MINT-Venlafaxine XR; PMS-Venlafaxine XR; PMSC-Venlafaxine XR; SANDOZ Venlafaxine XR; TARO-Venlafaxine XR; TEVA-Venlafaxine XR; Venlafaxine XR

Warning

- 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.
- This drug is not approved for use in children. Talk with the doctor.

What is this drug used for?

- It is used to treat depression.
- It is used to treat anxiety.
- It is used to treat panic attacks.
- 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 have high blood pressure.
- If you have narrow-angle glaucoma.
- If you are taking a weight loss drug.
- If you are taking any of these drugs: Linezolid or methylene blue.
- 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?

All products:

- 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. Sometimes, these can be severe and last for a long time. If you need to stop this drug, slowly stop it as ordered by your doctor. Talk with your doctor if you have any new or worsening signs.
- High blood pressure has happened with this drug. Have your blood pressure checked as you have been told 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.
- This drug may raise the chance of bleeding. Sometimes, bleeding can be life-threatening. Talk with the doctor.
- If you have bipolar disorder, manic episodes may happen while taking this drug. Call your doctor if you have signs of a manic episode.
- 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.
- Low blood sodium levels may happen with this drug. In very bad cases, this can be deadly. Talk with the doctor.
- High cholesterol has happened with this drug. If you have questions, talk with the doctor.
- This drug may affect certain lab tests. Tell all of your health care providers and lab workers that you take this drug.

- 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 mid to late pregnancy may lead to some health problems in the mother (like bleeding after delivery) or the newborn.
- Tell your doctor if you are breast-feeding. You will need to talk about any risks to your baby.

Extended-release capsules:

- You may see parts of this drug in your stool. This is normal and not a cause for concern.

Extended-release tablets:

- You may see the tablet shell in your stool. This is normal and not a cause for concern.

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.
- Signs of high blood pressure like very bad headache or dizziness, passing out, or change in eyesight.
- Seizures.
- Chest pain or pressure.
- Shortness of breath.
- Cough.
- Bone pain.
- Sex problems may happen with this drug. This includes decreased sex drive, trouble having an orgasm, ejaculation problems, or trouble getting or keeping an erection. In some cases, these problems have continued after stopping this drug. If you have any questions or concerns, talk with the doctor.
- 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:

- Trouble sleeping.
- Feeling nervous and excitable.
- Anxiety.

- Weight loss.
- Feeling dizzy, sleepy, tired, or weak.
- Shakiness.
- Headache.
- Sweating a lot.
- Constipation, diarrhea, stomach pain, upset stomach, throwing up, or decreased appetite.
- Gas.
- Dry mouth.
- Strange or odd dreams.
- 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 this drug with food.
- Take this drug at the same time of day.
- Keep taking this drug as you have been told by your doctor or other health care provider, even if you feel well.

Extended-release capsules:

- Swallow whole. Do not crush, chew, or dissolve the capsule or its contents.
- You may sprinkle contents of capsule on applesauce. Do not chew. Swallow right away and follow with cool water.

Extended-release tablets:

- Swallow whole. Do not chew, break, or crush.
- Take with a full glass of water.

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 questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

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

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