



EFFEXOR XR INSTRUCTION SHEET

EFFEXOR XR (Venlafaxine) is a broad spectrum medication, which means it works by blocking reuptake of Serotonin (at 37.5 to 75mg) and norepinephrine (at 150mg+). Serotonin and norepinephrine are the two primary stress neuromodulators. Because Effexor XR works on both these neuromodulators, it is effective in treating anxiety *and* depression. When Effexor XR is taken, the brain levels of Serotonin and Norepinephrine are lowered if too high (as in anxiety), or raised if too low (as in depression). Effexor XR has no significant drug/drug interactions and does not require dose decreases for the elderly. Effexor XR is a slow release capsule and comes in **37.5, 75, and 150mg sizes**.

EFFEXOR XR HOW TO TAKE FOR ANXIETY/DEPRESSION

For mild to moderate symptoms:

37.5mg in am (after breakfast)	Week 1
75mg in am	Week 2
75mg in am if improving, if not take 150mg	Week 3+

For moderate to severe symptoms:

37.5mg in am	Day 1
37.5mg in am and at suppertime	Days 2,3
75mg in am and at suppertime	Day 4+

For severe symptoms:

37.5mg in am and at suppertime	Day 1
75mg in am and at suppertime	Day 2
150mg in am and 75mg at suppertime	Day 3+

- **Partial dosing:** During transition, (if less than 37.5 or between 37.5 and 75mg is needed), capsules may be opened and used as a sprinkle form on any soft food. Sprinkled granules remain slow release unless bitten into.
PANIC PATIENTS NOTE: This step is especially important in panic disorder where initial doses as small as 9mg may be needed. It is essential to minimize side effects with panic patients because of extreme sensitivity to side effects. The dose can usually be gradually increased.
- **DO NOT abruptly stop the medication.** This can cause rebound symptoms such as muscle aches and nausea. When tapering the dose decrease by 37.5mg every 3 days.

WHAT IS THE BEST DOSE TO TAKE FOR ME?

Take enough, not too much! How much is that? I don't know. Each person has to find the dose for him/her that achieves the goal of remission (completely back to normal functioning).

- If you have some side effects but they are mild – remain on dose schedule
- If side effects are bothering you - shift the dose time, split the dose or decrease the dose for 3-4 days, then try to go back up
- If you have taken it for 1-2 weeks and not seeing significant benefit - increase the dose

SIDE EFFECTS

Possible side effects and suggestions for management:

- **Fatigue, Sluggishness** – First, shift the dose to evening meal. If still a problem, decrease the dose.
- **Delayed Orgasm** – Change dosing time to right after sex.
- **Nervousness** – Decrease or divide the dose, decrease caffeine intake.
- **Nausea** - Take with food, decrease dose or split dose for 3-4 days.
- **Sweating** – Take medication at suppertime, or decrease dose. Adding Cardura (a mild blood pressure medication) may help.
- **Increased blood pressure** – This occurs occasionally in susceptible patients and is usually higher doses. Is easily managed by lowering dose, splitting dose, or adding Cardura.

HOW DO I SWITCH FROM ANOTHER ANTIDEPRESSANT TO EFFEXOR XR?

Note: The most important rule of changeover is make only ONE change at a time. In other words don't change the Effexor XR dose and SSRI dose both on the same day.

Use a “stagger” changeover schedule for 2½ Weeks:

Days 1-4	37.5mg	Effexor XR in am	and	Current dose of SSRI in evening
Days 5-8	37.5mg	Effexor XR in am	and	Decrease SSRI by ¼ - ⅓
Days 9-12	75mg	Effexor XR in am	and	SSRI dose no change
Days 13-16	75mg	Effexor XR in am	and	Decrease SSRI another ¼ - ⅓

At 2½ weeks re-evaluate and if all is going well, discontinue current SSRI and consider going up on the Effexor XR if needed for symptoms.