Should You Take Antidepressants for Menopause Symptoms?

by AFRA WILLMORE

Antidepressants for Menopause

In the media, menopause is often portrayed in a comedic way with people experiencing mood swings. However, the reality of perimenopause and menopause for some people is not funny at all. Many people deal with feelings of isolation, anxiousness, depression and hot flashes. In this article, we will take a look at antidepressants for menopause as a treatment option.

How Menopause Can Affect a Person's Life

As menopause is a natural progression of life, not an illness, some people can be dismissive of others experiences.

Even people who have already been through menopause might imply that their younger friends and relatives need to:

- Pull themselves together.
- Get a grip.
- Grit their teeth.
- Get on with it and it will all soon be over.

People may endure entirely different symptoms and experiences during perimenopause or menopause.

Seeking Help and Support

Firstly, if you recognize that you might be feeling sad, anxious, depressed, lethargic or suicidal, it is important to seek help as soon as possible.

Join Online Chat Rooms

There are online chat rooms and message boards if you do not feel up to face-to-face conversations with friends. You might find that speaking to strangers about how you feel is easier than admitting to friends or family that you do not feel like you are coping.

Local Support Groups

Larger towns and cities may have support groups you can go along to. Whether it is physical or psychological issues you are finding difficult, there is sure to be others out there feeling similar stress.

Talk With Your Doctor

The best thing you can do is talk with your doctor. You may find that whether you are seeking help for anxiety or sadness, or for physical symptoms, they may offer you numerous treatment options including antidepressants. This may leave you feeling conflicted about antidepressants.

Are Antidepressants for You?

Some people are negative about antidepressants, seeing them as a sign the person taking them has somehow failed. Others worry that they will come with huge side effects, or be addictive, leading to a life of pill popping.

How the Media Perceives Antidepressants

The media is guilty of publishing scare stories about some varieties of antidepressants.

Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) like Prozac, in particular, have received bad press after it has been revealed that some people taking them could become suicidal, especially in the first few weeks of starting a course.

Reading past the headlines though will show that on the whole, antidepressants, including SSRIs, are safe, especially when package instructions are followed to the letter.

For instance, if you read the paperwork with SSRIs it states that if the patient starts to feel worse, they should immediately seek emergency help, even if that means ringing an ambulance.

You're Not Alone

Backing away from the extreme, there are millions of people across the globe who take antidepressants regularly with no drama and to great effect.

How Can Antidepressants Help Your Symptoms?

There is a wide range of antidepressants available, and some of them are occasionally used not just to relieve depression or anxiety but to combat other menopause symptoms, like hot flashes and night sweats.

Antidepressants prescribed for menopause may include:

- Fluoxetine (Prozac).
- Paroxetine (Paxil).
- Venlafaxine (Effexor).
- Clonidine (Catapres, Kapvay).
- Gabapentin (Neurontin).

Your physician may prescribe you a low dosage at the beginning to help manage symptoms.

Doctors will often recommend antidepressants for these symptoms if estrogen supplements have proved unsuccessful or if there is a reason the woman affected cannot or will not use hormone replacement therapy and other non-supplement methods have been ineffective.

If antidepressants are advised to alleviate depression, stress or anxiety, many types can be taken alongside hormone replacement therapy.

Your doctor will discuss options with you — some antidepressants cost more than others, and some are more suitable to be taken alongside other medications.

Will You Experience Side Effects?

Antidepressants are to be taken daily before you see any change in symptoms, mood or sleep patterns.

Side effects usually happen in these first weeks and may include:

- Nausea.
- Increased or decreased appetite.
- Weight gain or loss.
- Fatigue.
- Drowsiness.
- Insomnia.
- Dry mouth.
- Blurred vision.
- Constipation.
- Dizziness.
- Agitation.
- Irritability.
- Anxiety.

It’s important to keep in touch with the person or organization responsible for prescribing them and report any side effects.

Most side effects disappear after a few weeks, and the vast majority of people who take antidepressants go on to live a normal, happier life.

Addiction and Antidepressants

If you are concerned about becoming addicted to antidepressants – this is not possible.

There is a phenomenon called antidepressant discontinuation syndrome that may cause temporary symptoms and is interpreted as withdrawal symptoms.

These may include:

- Headaches.
- Dizziness.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Feelings of sadness, anxiety or fatigue.

This is why you should never decide to just suddenly stop taking antidepressants without support from your doctor. If you choose you want to discontinue treatment your doctor may suggest a gradual reduction in dosage to limit such symptoms.

Making Your Decision

If you are still hesitating about antidepressants for menopause-related anxiety, stress or depression or to alleviate other menopause symptoms – don’t.

We are lucky to have these medications available to us, and if you decided they are right for you, do not feel you have to explain or apologize to anyone.

You certainly will not be alone taking antidepressants – 1 in 6 Americans take antidepressants, so almost certainly there are people you know who use them to ease symptoms.