

How effective and safe are newer generation antidepressants in children and adolescents with diagnosed major depressive disorder?

Clinical Question	Are newer generation antidepressants effective and safe for use in children and adolescents with diagnosed major depressive disorder?
Bottom Line	There were no data to inform the comparison of greatest interest: what effect do antidepressants have on resolution of a diagnosis of major depressive disorder. Findings for secondary outcomes suggest that most newer antidepressants may be associated with small and unimportant reductions in depression symptoms compared with placebo, which raises the question of whether they should be used at all. Depressive disorder is heterogeneous so that the effects of newer generation antidepressants in young may be variable. There is evidence to support a greater range of options for first-line prescribing of antidepressants including sertraline, escitalopram, duloxetine as well as fluoxetine. It remains critical to ensure that there is close monitoring of suicide-related outcomes (combined suicidal ideation and suicide attempt) in those treated with newer generation antidepressants, given findings that many are associated with at least slightly greater odds of these outcomes.
Caveat	The trial populations were uncharacteristic of those accessing public child and adolescent mental health services in terms of the exclusion of those with comorbid disorders, and the exclusion of those at risk of suicide. The majority of trials were pharmaceutically funded and finally the trials were designed only to examine the short-term effects of antidepressant medication, however, this does not preclude the possibility that the effectiveness of treatment is only apparent over a longer period of time.
Context	Major depressive disorders have a significant impact on children and adolescents, including on educational and vocational outcomes, interpersonal relationships, and physical and mental health and well-being. There is an association between major depressive disorder and suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide. Antidepressant medication is used in moderate to severe depression; there is now a range of newer generations of these medications.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Hetrick SE, McKenzie JE, Bailey AP, Sharma V, Moller CI, Badcock PB, Cox GR, Merry SN, Meader N. New generation antidepressants for depression in children and adolescents: a network meta-analysis. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2021, Issue 5. Art. No.: CD013674. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD013674.pub2. This review contains 26 trials with a total of 6,930 participants.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD013674.pub2/full>