

**Are antidepressants effective for people with generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)?**

<b>Clinical Question</b>	What are the benefits and harms of antidepressants when treating people with GAD?
<b>Bottom Line</b>	Antidepressants, including SSRIs, SNRIs, show significant benefits over placebo in achieving a 50% reduction in anxiety symptoms and remission rates in GAD patients. They also improve quality of life, though some adverse effects like sleepiness are more common. There was no difference in acceptability between antidepressants and placebo. Specific antidepressants like agomelatine, duloxetine, escitalopram, and venlafaxine show potential benefits, while the current evidence shows sertraline and vortioxetine have similar response rates to placebo. More participants dropped out due to adverse effects in the antidepressant group, but fewer dropped out due to lack of efficacy compared to placebo. Further research is needed to understand the comparative effectiveness and tolerability of these treatments.
<b>Caveat</b>	The inclusion and exclusion criteria may limit the applicability of the results, as the review excluded people with medical comorbidities and included few studies with psychiatric comorbidities, making the population unrepresentative of typical GAD patients.
<b>Context</b>	GAD is a common psychiatric condition characterized by excessive worry about daily activities, accompanied by physical symptoms like trembling, muscle aches, and nausea. It often leads to fatigue, irritability, and sleep disturbances. GAD has a prevalence of around 5.1% in the US. It is more common in women and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Treatments include non-pharmacological options like cognitive therapy and pharmacological treatments such as antidepressants, benzodiazepines, and pregabalin. Antidepressants, particularly SSRIs and SNRIs, are frequently used due to their lower risk of dependence. They work by increasing serotonin or noradrenaline levels in the brain, helping to reduce anxiety and worry.
<b>Cochrane Systematic Review</b>	Kopcalic K, Arcaro J, Pinto A, Ali S, Barbui C, Curatoli C, Martin J, Guaiana G. Antidepressants versus placebo for generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2025, Issue 1. Art. No.: CD012942. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD012942.pub2. This review contains 37 trials which included 12,226 participants.

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Systematic review link:

<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD012942.pub2/full>