

Teaming Up for Better Medication Treatments

Fast Facts

- ◆ *High Dose* generally means a dose that is more than the highest dose recommended by the US Food and Drug Administration.
- ◆ The recommended dose for children and teens is usually lower than the adult dose.
- ◆ A high dose does not always mean better treatment. One person might feel better on a high dose. Another person may not feel better, and could feel worse.
- ◆ Taking high doses of mental health medications can increase side effects and make it hard to take medication on a regular basis.



What does the research say?

- ◆ Many people take higher doses of mental health medication than they need. Doses that are more than the recommended amount usually do not work better.
- ◆ High doses of mental health medication can increase the risk for side effects. Side effects can include trouble thinking, sleeping too much or too little, problems with muscle control, weight gain, diabetes, and increased risk for heart disease.
- ◆ Children and teens are very sensitive to serious medication side effects including weight gain and diabetes. Some mental health medications have been shown to increase the risk of suicide.



Why is taking the right amount of medication important?

- ◆ Finding the right dose can help you get the most from your mental health medication, and avoid troublesome and serious side effects. The right dose can also help lower your chance of having long term health problems, like heart disease and diabetes.

My friend takes the same medication. Why are our doses different?

- ◆ The dose that is best for you will depend upon many things. Your age, diagnosis, and other medical conditions can all make a difference. Taking more than one medication can also affect how your body responds to medication. The medications and doses that are best for you may also change over time. Talk to your doctor about any questions or concerns you have about your medications. Also tell your doctor if you are taking other medications, and if you use tobacco, alcohol, or street drugs because these can affect the way your mental health medications work.

How should I talk to my doctor about my medication dose?

You and your doctor can work together to find the right medication dose for you. Important questions to ask about all of your medications are:

- ◆ How will this medication help me?
- ◆ What are the side effects?
- ◆ How will I know if the medication is working?
- ◆ How will I know if the medication isn't working?

You can ask your doctor if the dose of your medication is more than the recommended dose. If so, you can ask:

- ◆ How does a high dose help me?
- ◆ What are the long-term health risks?
- ◆ How long will I need this high dose?
- ◆ What would happen if you lowered my dose?

If you and your doctor decide to change the dose of your medication, you can ask:

- ◆ How long will it take before I see a change?
- ◆ What should I watch out for?
- ◆ If I don't feel right, is there someone I can call right away for advice?

In addition to medication, talk to your doctor about other important ways to help you reach your recovery goals.

More Resources

National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI):
www.nami.org

National Empowerment Center:
power2u.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration:
www.samhsa.gov

Mental Health America (NMHA):
www.nmha.org



How the New York State Office of Mental Health is Helping

The New York State Office of Mental Health (NYSOMH) has teamed up with your providers to improve your mental health care so that you can receive the best treatment possible. For more information about this NYSOMH mental health prescribing quality improvement project, or to download copies of this brochure go to:

www.psyckes.org