

## Patient Education

### ESCITALOPRAM - ORAL

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The following information is intended to supplement, not substitute for, the expertise and judgment of your physician, pharmacist or other healthcare professional. It should not be construed to indicate that use of the drug is safe, appropriate, or effective for you. Consult your healthcare professional before using this drug.

#### ESCITALOPRAM - ORAL

(es-sye-TAL-oh-pram)

COMMON BRAND NAME(S): Lexapro

#### USES:

Escitalopram is used to treat depression and generalized anxiety disorder (GAD). This medication works by restoring the balance of certain chemicals in the brain to improve mood and feelings of well-being. It is known as a selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor (SSRI).

#### HOW TO USE:

Take this medication by mouth, with or without food, usually once daily or as directed by your doctor. Dosage is based on your medical condition and response to therapy.

It is important to continue taking this medication even if your symptoms begin to improve. Do not stop taking this medication without consulting your doctor. Some conditions may become worse when the drug is abruptly stopped. Your dose may need to be gradually decreased to reduce symptoms such as burning or tingling sensations, headache, or feeling anxious.

It may take up to 4 to 6 weeks before the full benefit of this drug takes effect. Use this medication regularly in order to get the most benefit from it. To help you remember, take it at the same time each day.

If you are using the escitalopram oral solution, use a specially marked medicine dropper or medicine cup to measure the correct dose prescribed by your doctor. Ask your pharmacist if you have any questions.

Inform your doctor if your condition persists or worsens, or if you have new symptoms such as feeling agitated or hostile, or having suicidal thoughts.

#### SIDE EFFECTS:

Nausea, drowsiness, dizziness, fatigue, increased sweating, and trouble sleeping may occur. If any of these effects persist or worsen, notify your doctor or pharmacist promptly.

Remember that your doctor has prescribed this medication because the benefit to you is greater than the risk of side effects. Many people using this medication do not have serious side effects.

Tell your doctor immediately if any of these unlikely but serious side effects occur: changes in sexual interest/performance/satisfaction, uncontrolled muscle movements (e.g., tremor, twitching).

Tell your doctor immediately if any of these rare but very serious side effects occur: unusual or severe mental/mood changes (including rare thoughts of suicide), easy bruising/bleeding, black

stools, vomit that looks like coffee grounds, fast/irregular heartbeat, fainting, seizures, changes in the amount of urine.

For males, in the very unlikely event you have a painful, prolonged erection (lasting more than 4 hours), stop using this drug and seek immediate medical attention or permanent problems could occur.

A very serious allergic reaction to this drug is unlikely, but seek immediate medical attention if it occurs. Symptoms of a serious allergic reaction may include: rash, itching, swelling, severe dizziness, trouble breathing.

If you notice other effects not listed above, contact your doctor or pharmacist.

### **PRECAUTIONS:**

Before taking escitalopram, tell your doctor or pharmacist if you are allergic to it; or to citalopram; or if you have any other allergies.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist your medical history, including: bleeding or clotting problems, heart disease, kidney disease, liver disease, seizures, certain mental disorders (e.g., mania, bipolar disorder), mineral problems (e.g., hyponatremia, SIADH), thyroid disease.

This drug may make you dizzy or drowsy; use caution while engaging in activities requiring alertness, such as driving or using machinery. Limit alcoholic beverages.

Though these effects are uncommon, depression can lead to thoughts or attempts of suicide. Watch for any worsening of your condition, unusual changes in behavior, or thoughts of suicide, especially at the beginning of therapy or when the dose is changed. Tell your doctor immediately if you have any suicidal thoughts, worsening depression, or any other unusual mental/mood changes (e.g., feeling angry, anxious, irritable, restless, having panic attacks, or experiencing rapid speech). Keep all medical appointments so your healthcare professional can monitor your progress closely and adjust/change your medication if needed.

Before having surgery, tell your doctor or dentist that you are using this medication.

Caution is advised when using this drug in the elderly because they may be more sensitive to the effects of the drug, especially drowsiness.

This medication should be used only when clearly needed during pregnancy. Inform your doctor immediately if you are or think you might be pregnant. Discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor. If you have been taking this medication regularly for an extended period of time, do not suddenly stop taking it. Consult your doctor for further instructions. If this medication is used during the last 3 months of pregnancy, infrequently your newborn may develop symptoms, including feeding or breathing difficulties, constant crying, muscle stiffness, restlessness, vomiting, or seizures. Tell your doctor immediately if you notice any of these symptoms in your newborn.

This medication passes into breast milk and may have undesirable effects on a nursing infant. Therefore, breast-feeding is not recommended while using this drug. Consult your doctor before breast-feeding.

### **DRUG INTERACTIONS:**

Your healthcare professionals (e.g., doctor or pharmacist) may already be aware of any possible

drug interactions and may be monitoring you for them. Do not start, stop or change the dosage of any medicine before checking with them first.

This drug should not be used with the following medications because very serious interactions may occur: pimozone, drugs for weight control (e.g., dexfenfluramine, fenfluramine, phentermine, sibutramine), MAO inhibitors (e.g., furazolidone, isocarboxazid, linezolid, phenelzine, procarbazine, selegiline, tranylcypromine).

Avoid taking MAO inhibitors within 2 weeks before or after treatment with this medication. If you are currently using any of these medications listed above, tell your doctor or pharmacist before starting escitalopram.

Do not take this medication together with citalopram because the two medications are very similar. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for more details.

Before using this medication, tell your doctor or pharmacist of all prescription and nonprescription/herbal products you may use, especially of: other SSRI antidepressants (e.g., fluoxetine, sertraline, paroxetine), other drugs for mood or behavior (e.g., bupropion, lithium), drugs that may cause bleeding (e.g., aspirin, anticoagulants such as warfarin, antiplatelet drugs such as clopidogrel, NSAIDs such as ibuprofen), anti-seizure drugs (e.g., carbamazepine), certain medications for headache (e.g., sumatriptan), cimetidine, herbal medications (e.g., ayahuasca, St. John's wort).

This drug can slow down the removal of other drugs from your body by affecting certain liver enzymes. Some examples of these affected drugs include metoprolol, tramadol, trazodone, venlafaxine, and tricyclic depressants such as desipramine.

Low-dose aspirin (usually 81-325 mg per day) for heart attack or stroke prevention should be continued unless otherwise directed by your doctor. Aspirin is similar to NSAID drugs and can increase the risk of bleeding in combination with this medication (see above). Discuss the risks and benefits with your doctor.

Check all prescription and nonprescription medicine labels carefully since many contain pain relievers/fever reducers (NSAIDs such as aspirin or naproxen), which may increase the risk of side effects.

Tell your doctor if you take any drugs that cause drowsiness, such as: anti-anxiety drugs (e.g., diazepam), antihistamines that cause drowsiness (e.g., diphenhydramine), medicine for sleep, muscle relaxants, narcotic pain relievers (e.g., codeine), sedatives/tranquilizers.

Check the labels of all your medicines (e.g. cough-and-cold products) because they may contain drowsiness-causing ingredients. Ask your pharmacist about the safe use of those products.

#### **OVERDOSE:**

If overdose is suspected, contact your local poison control center or emergency room immediately. US residents can call the US national poison hotline at 1-800-222-1222. Canadian residents should call their local poison control center directly. Symptoms of overdose may include: severe dizziness/drowsiness, fast/irregular heartbeat, persistent nausea/vomiting, unusual sweating, or seizures.

#### **NOTES:**

Do not share this medication with others.

Laboratory and/or medical tests may be performed to monitor your progress.

**MISSED DOSE:**

If you miss a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If it is near the time of the next dose, skip the missed dose and resume your usual dosing schedule. Do not double the dose to catch up.

**STORAGE:**

Store at room temperature (77 degrees F or 25 degrees C) away from light and moisture. Brief storage between 59-86 degrees F (15-30 degrees C) is permitted. Do not store in the bathroom. Keep all medicines away from children and pets.