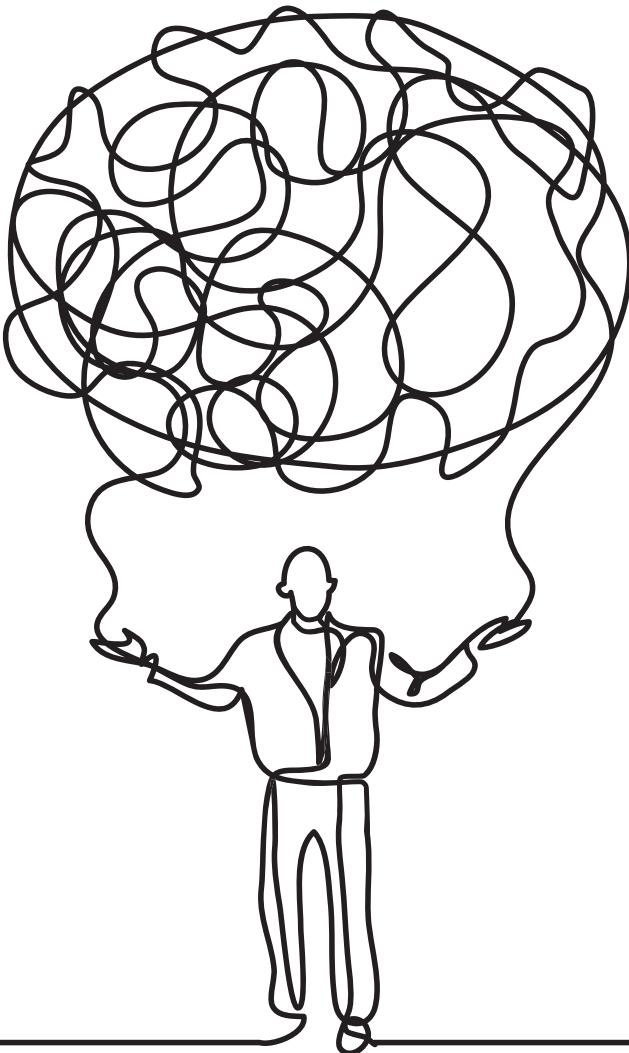


Medications and your mental health: What you should know

When chemical imbalances in the brain lead to mood and behavior shifts, overall health and well-being may suffer. Luckily, prescription medications are available that can help, especially when combined with therapy, behavioral modifications, and lifestyle changes. Following your mental health care plan, understanding your medication, and practicing a little patience can go a long way in helping you feel your best.

“It takes time for medication to work—and for you to heal,” says Dr. Matthew Stanley, Senior Medical Director of Behavioral Health at Wellmark. “Sticking with your doctor and specific treatment will help you find the right mix of therapy and medication.”

To get the most out of your mental health medications and care plan, consider the following factors.



Need immediate help? Dial or text “988” from any mobile device to connect with a Suicide & Crisis Lifeline care provider (this service is available 24/7, 365-days a year).

See your doctor before taking any medication.

Everyone reacts differently to medication, which is why visiting with a doctor before taking a prescription drug is essential. Your provider will assess your age, symptoms, and medical history to determine if medication is an appropriate next step in your journey.

Understand that medication is only part of the solution.

Before prescribing medication, your doctor will first discuss opportunities to change behavior, modify your lifestyle, and participate in therapy. As an additional layer of treatment, your provider may also recommend [mental health medications](#).²

Only 50% of patients take medications as prescribed.¹

Ask questions about your medication’s benefits and risks.

[Studies show](#) that patients who ask questions and understand the pros and cons of their medications practice safer usage, trust their provider, and achieve greater overall success.³



6 COMMON MENTAL HEALTH MEDICATIONS

Although they may not cure mental illness, the following [commonly prescribed psychotropic medications](#) can improve symptoms:

1. ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATION:

Treats anxiety and panic disorders, reduces agitation and insomnia.

2. ANTIDEPRESSANTS:

For depression and anxiety; manages feelings of sadness, boosts energy levels, and increases focus.

3. ANTIPSYCHOTICS:

Treats acute psychotic disorders, like schizophrenia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and obsessive compulsive disorder.

4. SEDATIVES:

For short-term anxiety and sleep problems (some may be habit forming).

5. STIMULANTS:

Manages unorganized behavior and treats attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

6. MOOD-STABILIZERS:

Balances the highs and lows of bipolar disorders.

Know that generic medications are available.

Sharing the same molecular makeup as their branded counterparts, generic medications are an effective mental health medication option. A bonus: Most are covered by your health plan — and cost less than name brands.

Be aware of potential side effects and communicate issues with your doctor.

When starting a new medication, ask your doctor about potential side effects and follow-up if you experience issues. For example, weight gain and nausea are common, but your doctor can prescribe alternate drugs, adjust your dose, or recommend new routines to make you more comfortable.

Give yourself time to feel better.

Certain prescription medications need time to build up in your body before you experience benefits⁴. During your regularly scheduled med checks, your doctor will assess your medication's effectiveness and make any necessary changes. This is a normal part of the process, and although it may take time before you find the right balance, many patients find it's worth the wait.

NOTE: If you begin to feel worse or experience unexpected side effects, contact your doctor immediately.

Don't stop taking your medication.

After taking medications for a few weeks, you'll likely start feeling better. But that doesn't mean you should stop taking your prescription. Because mental health prescriptions manage symptoms, discontinuing your medicine can open the door for those symptoms to return.

**Medications
may take 6-8
weeks to work.⁵**

It's OK to not feel okay. Your State of Iowa benefits can help.

Your State of Iowa health plan from Wellmark® Blue Cross® and Blue Shield® is here to connect you with the mental health care and support you need. Review your [pharmacy coverage](#), visit [Wellmark.com/Finder](https://www.wellmark.com/Finder) to find in-network mental health providers, or use [Doctor On Demand](#) to schedule a virtual visit.

1 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3068890>

2 <https://www.wellmark.com/blue/healthy-living/your-treatment-options-for-anxiety-and-depression>

3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3068890>

4 <https://www.mhanational.org/medication>

5 <https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Treatment/Mental-Health-Medications/What-to-Expect-From-Your-Medications>

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