FLUOXETINE

General Information: Fluoxetine is a serotonin-specific drug used to treat depression, anxiety and eating disorders. Marketed as Sarafem, it is used to treat premenstrual mood problems. Fluoxetine is not habit-forming.

Guidelines for Use: Fluoxetine is available in 10, 20 and 40 mg. capsules and tablets and in liquid form; the tablets can be broken in half to get the correct dosage. It is also available as Prozac Weekly, a 90 mg. tablet taken once weekly. The usual starting dose is 10-20 mg. per day, taken at bedtime or in the morning, whichever you prefer or your clinician directs. The dosage may be increased at 1-2 week intervals if needed to control symptoms. It may be taken with food to reduce nausea. Some people begin to notice improvement in symptoms in 1-2 weeks, but it may take 4-6 weeks before the maximum benefit is reached. If you forget to take a dose but remember within 8 hours or so, go ahead and take it when you remember. If it is close to your next dose, skip the missed dose; do not take double doses. Store the drug in a dry, tightly-closed, light-resistant container out of the reach of children.

Side Effects of Fluoxetine:

*Note: Most side effects taper off during treatment as you become used to the drug.

Common side effects (10% or more of users experience; notify your clinician if severe):

--anxiety, nervousness

Less common side effects (less than 10% of users experience; notify if severe):

--nausea --insomnia --headache
--drowsiness --sweating --diarrhea, stomach cramps
--constipation --change in appetite
--sexual dysfunction: May not go away; discuss with your clinician.
--skin rash: STOP THE DRUG AND CALL YOUR CLINICIAN.

*Call your clinician right away if you have worsening depression, thoughts of suicide, or sudden or severe changes in mood or behavior such as feeling anxious, agitated, panicky, irritable, hostile, aggressive, or severely restless, especially at the beginning of treatment or after a change in dosage of your medication.*

Any antidepressant, including fluoxetine, may cause activation into a state of mania or mild mania (“hypomania”) in vulnerable individuals, usually but not always those who have bipolar disorder. Such a state is characterized by increased energy and hyperactivity, decreased need for sleep, marked euphoria or irritability, impulsiveness and an increase in pleasure-seeking. CALL YOUR CLINICIAN AS SOON AS POSSIBLE IF YOU DEVELOP THESE SYMPTOMS.
**Precautions:** Do not take this drug if you have ever had an allergic reaction to fluoxetine. Inform your clinician if you have any known drug allergies; if you have epilepsy, kidney or liver disease; if you are taking any other drug (prescription or non-prescription), vitamin, supplement or herb; if you will be undergoing anesthesia or surgery while taking this drug. **Inform your clinician if you are or might be pregnant.** Exposure to this drug in the uterus is unlikely to increase risk of fetal malformations, but some newborns exposed to this drug after 20 weeks of gestation suffer from respiratory and other difficulties that range from mild to severe. You and your clinician will need to weigh the benefits of treatment against the risks to mother and baby. It is approved to treat depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder in children. Metabolism of the drug may be slowed in the elderly, so lower doses may be needed.

**This drug may cause drowsiness.** If so, avoid driving or operating machinery until you are sure your alertness and coordination are not affected.

Fluoxetine rarely causes discontinuation symptoms, but nonetheless it should be tapered down gradually under the supervision of your clinician.

To date, overdoses of fluoxetine alone have rarely been fatal. However, immediate emergency medical care should be sought in cases of overdose. Symptoms of overdose include agitation, convulsions and nausea.

**Interactions:**

**Alcohol:** Although the manufacturers of fluoxetine do not recommend the use of alcohol when on this drug, it appears that light social drinking is acceptable. Be aware that the effects of alcohol may be enhanced. Alcohol use may contribute to depression, so is not recommended for people experiencing depression.

**Food:** No restrictions.

**Other drugs:** A POTENTIALLY TOXIC REACTION COULD OCCUR IF FLUOXETINE IS TAKEN WITH MAO INHIBITORS (NARDIL, PARNATE). FLUOXETINE MUST BE STOPPED FOR AT LEAST 5 WEEKS BEFORE STARTING MAO-I’S AND MAO-I’S MUST BE STOPPED FOR AT LEAST 2 WEEKS BEFORE STARTING FLUOXETINE. Care should be taken when this drug is used in combination with any of the following drugs: warfarin (Coumadin), beta blockers (Inderal, Lopressor, others), antiarrhythmic drugs, antipsychotics (Clozaril, Haldol, Trilafon, Mellaril, Risperdal, Seroquel), other antidepressants (Elavil, Tofranil, Pamelor, Norpramin, Celexa, Remeron, Desyrel, Anafranil, Effexor), some benzodiazepines (Valium, Xanax, Halcion), Ambien, hormones (estrogen, progesterone, birth control pills), Celebrex, opiates (codeine, dextromethorphan, hydrocodone) and some other medications. Other drugs may also be problematic; discuss with your clinician. **DO NOT USE THIS DRUG IN COMBINATION WITH ST. JOHN’S WORT.**