



A Patient's Handout for Citalopram/Escitalopram and the FDA Warning

Brand Name	Generic Name
Celexa [®]	citalopram
Lexapro [®]	escitalopram

Facts about citalopram and escitalopram

- Citalopram/Celexa[®] and Escitalopram/Lexapro[®] are in a class of antidepressants called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs). The medications are thought to work by increasing the amount of serotonin in the brain.
- On 8/24/11 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning to healthcare professionals and patients that the antidepressant citalopram/Celexa[®], should no longer be used in doses above 40mg for most patients because of the risk of abnormal electrical activity of the heart. The warning only involved citalopram, but research has shown we should be cautious with both medications.

What you should know about while on citalopram or escitalopram

- When taken at recommended doses, the risk of heart rhythm disturbances is very low. The risk increases as the dose of the medication increases. If you are currently taking citalopram/Celexa[®] in doses greater than 40 mg per day or escitalopram/Lexapro[®] in doses above 20 mg per day, talk to your behavioral health medical practitioner about this. S/he may recommend changing your dose or may recommend some additional monitoring for you.
 - Your healthcare practitioner may order an electrocardiogram (ECG, EKG) to monitor your heart rate and rhythm. This is a test that checks for problems with the electrical activity of your heart.
- It is important that you and your doctor work together to find the right dose for you.

What side effects should I report to a healthcare practitioner?

- Immediately report any of these signs of an irregular heartbeat:
 - Chest pain
 - Fast or slow heartbeat
 - Shortness of breath
 - Dizziness or fainting
- Also report other side effects to your healthcare practitioner including agitation or other changes in mood, muscle twitching or overactive reflexes, racing heartbeat, fever, vomiting, diarrhea, or muscle rigidity.

What else should I tell my behavioral health practitioner?

- Be sure to tell your healthcare providers about all medications you are taking, including over-the-counter medications as there may be interactions between products.

Important reminder: Don't stop taking your citalopram/Celexa[®] or escitalopram/Lexapro[®] or change your dose without talking to your behavioral health medical practitioner. Stopping citalopram suddenly may cause unwanted side effects such as anxiety, feeling restless, changes in sleep, headache, sweating, nausea, dizziness or confusion.