

**Mental Health Nursing  
Class Preparation  
Antidepressant Therapy**

**Directions:** Please fill in the blanks and answer the questions in the spaces provided.

1. What is the mechanism by which antidepressant medications achieve their desired effect (regardless of the different physiological processes by which this action is accomplished)?

**Antidepressants work by increasing amount of serotonin neurotransmitter (and sometimes norepinephrine depending on type of antidepressant). It does so by acting on the neuron reuptake receptors, so that serotonin and norepinephrine stay in the synapse longer, elongating the effects of the neurotransmitters.**

2. For what must a nurse be on the alert with a client who is receiving antidepressant medication?

**For anti-depressants, clients can experience suicidal ideations, so it is very important for a nurse to monitor for suicidal ideations while on antidepressant therapy**

3. When should a nurse expect a client to begin showing signs of symptomatic relief after the initiation of antidepressant therapy?

**Symptomatic relief can start within 1-2 weeks, but it usually takes about 4-8 weeks to see full therapeutic effect.**

4. Give an example of a tricyclic antidepressant: **Amitriptyline**

Give an example of an MAOI: **Isocarboxazid**

Give an example of an SSRI: **Fluoxetine**

5. Describe some common side effects and nursing implications for tricyclic antidepressants.

**These antidepressants tend to have anticholinergic side effects such as blurred vision, urinary retention, tachycardia, dizziness, and hypotension. As for nursing implications, nurses should educate the patient and family that these side effects are normal and will subside after a few weeks, change position slowly to prevent dizziness upon standing, and to never discontinue abruptly because it can cause discontinuation syndrome (nausea, altered heartbeat, nightmares, and cold sweats). Nursing should also be aware of if they have a suicidal client, they can only get a weeks supply at a time because TFCAs are fatal in an overdose.**

6. **Hypertensive crisis** is the most potentially life-threatening adverse effect of MAOIs. Symptoms for which the nurse must be on the alert include **Hypertensive crisis includes severe increase in blood pressure, tachycardia, SOB, chest pain, severe headache, n/v, sweating, severe anxiety, nosebleed.**

7. What must be done to prevent these symptoms from occurring?

**Avoid foods with tyramine (avocados, figs, a lot of bananas, cured meats, liver, pepperoni, salami, pickled herring, smoked salmon, ALL CHEESES, yeast extract, tap beers, soy sauce, etc.). Patients should also avoid taking new medications until MAOIs have been discontinued for 14 days.**