Antidepressant Encyclopedia Article

Antidepressant

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Antidepressant

Antidepressants are a diverse group of drugs used to treat symptoms of depression. The term "depression" describes several psychiatric disorders in which a person has abnormal moods. Everyone has moods—silly, happy, angry, sad. Most people, no matter what mood they happen to be in, are able to follow their daily routines and meet obligations at school, at work, and with their families. Sometimes a person has moods, often of anger or sadness, that are extremely powerful. Often these moods, not the person, determine behavior. Very strong moods can prevent a person from completing work or lead to clashes with others. When this happens regularly, the moods are considered abnormal.

Antidepressants can also be useful for treating anxiety, panic disorders, and chronic pain. They are not helpful for short-term depressed moods that are part of everyday life or for the normal period of grief that follows loss of a loved one. Antidepressants include tricyclics (such as Tofranil and Aventyl), monoamine oxidase inhibitors (Nardil, Marplan), lithium (Eskalith, Lithonate), nontricyclics, and selective serotonin-reuptake inhibitors (Prozac, Paxil, Zoloft).

See Also

Alcohol Treatment: Medications; Personality Disorder.