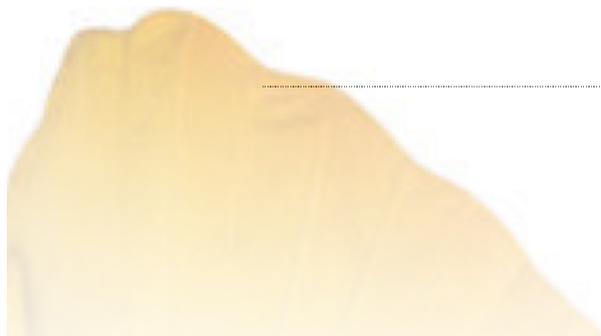


Medications
Guide:
Public Speaking
And Social
Anxiety



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Medications Specifically for Public Speaking and Social Anxiety

This is not intended to be medical advice. Please consult your medical doctor or psychiatrist for medical advice and information tailored to your specific situation.

Public speaking anxiety is type of social anxiety. This guide covers both social anxiety and public speaking anxiety.

Research has shown that most people who have social anxiety are **using medication that has NOT been shown to work on social anxiety**. Also, frequently many who are on the right medication, are **on a lower dosage than what is recommended by the research**. The following section provides information on medications specifically for social anxiety and public speaking anxiety.

The most common drugs for social anxiety include **beta-blockers, benzodiazepines, Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs), Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs), and antidepressants**. Three

SSRIs are approved for social anxiety by the **US Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**: Paroxetine (Paxil), Sertraline (Zoloft) and Venlafaxine (Effexor).

- Beta blockers
- Benzodiazepines
- Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)
- Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOI's)
- Antidepressants

Phenelzine (an MAOI) has been shown effective in social anxiety studies.

Beta blockers and benzodiazepines can be taken “as needed” leading up to a fearful situation (a public speaking event or fearful

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social situation). MAOIs, SSRIs, and anti-depressants are taken every day, require several weeks to take effect, and require a gradual tapering off schedule to discontinue the medication. Note that some doctors prescribe Benzodiazepines for every day use, but be aware that they are addictive and have a high anxiety relapse rate.

As Needed

Beta blockers. Commonly used beta blockers include propranolol (Inderal) and atenolol (Tenormin). Propranolol was shown to be effective in social anxiety studies. These medications work by blocking the stimulating effect of epinephrine (adrenaline). They reduce heart rate, blood pressure, pounding of the heart, and shaking. They can be used “as needed” to control symptoms for a particular situation. They can be taken 10-30 minutes before giving a speech or facing a fearful situation.

Benzodiazepines (“Benzos”). Commonly used benzodiazepines include clonazepam (Klonopin), alprazolam (Xanax), diazepam (Valium), and lorazepam (Ativan). The exact mechanism of action of benzodiazepines is not known. All benzodiazepines affect gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), a neurotransmitter chemical that nerves use to communicate with one another. Scientists believe that excessive activity of the nervous system may be the cause of anxiety, and GABA reduces the activity of the nerves in the brain and spinal cord.

Taken every day for weeks or months can create a physical dependence and be habit-forming. Discontinuation should be gradual, and stopping their use suddenly can produce withdrawal symptoms. Talk with your doctor before discontinuing. The

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interaction between benzodiazepines and alcohol can lead to serious and possibly life-threatening complications. Drowsiness and loss of coordination are common; fatigue and mental slowing or confusion can also occur. Don't drive or operate machinery while using these medications. Use these judiciously and infrequently if at all.

Research has shown that risk of relapse is extremely high once you stop taking benzodiazepines. Taking benzodiazepines regularly may prevent you from realizing the benefits of cognitive-behavioral therapy (talk to your therapist).

Conclusion - beta blockers and benzos

For performance anxiety or public speaking anxiety (or any situation where you are performing in front of a group or audience), a combination of a beta blocker and a benzo works well for many people. Take both 30-minutes before the event.

They work especially well when combined with new self-talk and cognitive-behavioral fear management techniques. Note that your fear can still escalate with a beta blocker and benzo, and new thought patterns are necessary to bring your anxiety into control. When self-talk and beta blocker/benzo are used, this can help to manage your anxiety.

The advantage is that the beta blocker and benzo can be taken only as needed. This means you're not taking medication everyday. You won't develop a dependence on the benzo when you take it infrequently, and you won't have the side-effects of the other medications that have to be taken every day.

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Taken Every Day

Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs). Commonly used MAOIs include phenelzine (Nardil), selegiline (Emsam, Eldepryl, Zelapar), isocarboxazid (Marplan), Tranylcypromine (Parnate). Phenelzine has been shown effective in social anxiety studies. MAOIs increase the amount of the neurotransmitters norepinephrine, serotonin and dopamine in the brain. MAOIs generally require severe diet restrictions because they can cause dangerously high blood pressure when taken with certain foods. Selegiline is available as a skin patch which causes fewer side effects than MAOIs taken orally and may not require diet restrictions, but has not yet been fully tested on social anxiety.

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs). Commonly used SSRIs include paroxetine (Paxil), fluoxetine (Prozac), fluvoxamine (Luvox), and sertraline (Zoloft). Paroxetine (Paxil) is the only drug approved for social anxiety at this time by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). SSRIs block the reabsorption (reuptake) of the neurotransmitter Serotonin thereby increasing the amount of Serotonin in the brain. Some of the potential known side-effects include headaches, nausea, diarrhea, insomnia, diminished libido, weight gain, suicide, reduced blood clotting capacity which can cause bleeding problems and other symptoms.

Other Antidepressants. Tricyclic antidepressants such as imipramine and clomipramine have limited data, but have so far been shown to be ineffective in the treatment of social anxiety. Other antidepressants such as Bupropion (Wellbutrin) and Buspirone have had mixed results in the treatment of social anxiety.

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Be aware

- The science of brain chemistry is still in its infancy. There is much that we don't know about anxiety and how it works in the brain and body.
- Medicine is not sophisticated enough at this time to be able to pinpoint a problem like anxiety without affecting other parts of the body. That's why every drug has a list of known side-effects – because the drug will affect other parts of the body. The medications may also have unknown side-effects (unintended consequences) that may be unique to each individual.
- Individuals will react differently to medications.
- Take the medication before you are faced with a fearful situation to test your reaction to the medication.
- For those medications that are taken every day, expect to work at finding the right medication and right dosage through trial and error in consultation with your doctor.
- Typically, once the medication is discontinued, the anxiety returns. Medication does not cure the anxiety.
- The most effective way to overcome fear is through exposure (practice) to the fearful situation.
- Taking medication can be a subtle form of avoidance which actually keeps the anxiety cycle alive. Medication can also reduce your self-esteem and a sense of your own ability to manage anxiety.

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For more information on medications and potential side-effects search the drug at:

- [National Institute of Health \(NIH\) Medline Plus](#)
- [Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Harvard](#)
- [WebMD](#)
- [Drugs.com](#)

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Note: The information in this guide covers drug studies conducted specifically on the treatment of social anxiety. Just because a drug does not prove effective for social anxiety does not mean that it is not effective for other other types of anxieties or depression. We recommend that you research the best medications specifically for those issues.

Quiz – Medications

Please answer True (T) or False (F).

	Question	T/F
1	Many people with social anxiety may be on medications that have not been shown to work with social anxiety or may be on the wrong dosage.	
2	With all medications, it is critical to talk with your doctor or psychiatrist. The information in this section is not meant to take the place of talking with your doctor.	

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Quiz Answers: T, T