

Prozac

Fluoxetine hydrochloride

What is Prozac?

Prozac is an [SSRI](#) 'feel good', [anti-depressant](#) drug. It was first manufactured by the Eli Lilly drug company in America in 1987 and is now commonly prescribed by doctors in this country for depression. Its chemical name is fluoxetine hydrochloride.

Prozac usually comes in pill form. It is also being prescribed by doctors to help people who have become dependent on cocaine and crack and heroin. There is also some evidence of the beginnings of Prozac use in combination with drugs such as an [LSD](#), [ecstasy](#) or [cannabis](#). The fact that it is relatively easily obtained from doctors means that there is, as yet, little illegal trade in Prozac.

UK Situation

By 1992 over 500,000 people in the UK and over 11 million in America had been prescribed Prozac. Currently, over 3 million prescriptions of the drugs are made every year in the UK. Some of these people claim it has totally changed their lives for the better. They feel a lot happier, more assertive and in control of their lives. Other people say Prozac has done nothing much for them and a few claim it has made their lives worse.

The jury is still out on Prozac and more research is needed to find out why some people seem to greatly benefit from its use whilst other people do not. There have been many previous claims about wonder drugs that are supposed to bring great benefits with few side effects. Heroin and tranquillisers were both seen in this way when they were first introduced but over time more and more problems became associated with their use.

The law

Prozac is a **Prescription Only** drug under the [Medicines Act](#) but not controlled under the [Misuse of Drugs Act](#). It is not an offence to be in possession of Prozac without a prescription but it is an offence to supply it (including giving it away free) to other people.

Effects/ risks

Prozac is usually prescribed to be taken daily over a period of months; it takes 2 to 3 weeks for the drug to start working.

The most common side effects of taking Prozac are insomnia, headaches, nausea, a dry mouth, feeling jittery and decreased interest in sex. Other possible side effects include skin rashes and loss of co-ordination. It is not recommended for people who have liver or kidney problems or epilepsy or for pregnant or breast feeding women.

[Withdrawal symptoms](#) can occur if the user stops the drug abruptly, causing things like balance problems, nausea, electric shock sensations, vivid dreams, nervousness and flu-like symptoms.

There are no recorded overdoses associated with Prozac use by itself. However, taking Prozac with some other anti-depressant medical drugs can cause very high blood pressure, vomiting and shock and has led to some people being hospitalised.

There is an intense debate about the mood altering effects of taking Prozac. Some users and doctors see Prozac as a wonder drug that has totally transformed people's lives for the better. Many users, especially in America, have found the drug has helped them quickly move from depression to a much happier state of mind and enabled them to gain in confidence and make major life changes.

Other people have had very different experiences of Prozac. Some give up quickly because of side effects. Others say it has little impact on their state of mind. More worrying have been reports of patients committing suicide, acting in violent ways and becoming over excited and agitated. The limited research available suggest that this is more likely where patients are given very high doses and/ or have a long history of serious mental illness.

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