

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services

Drug Information Sheet: MAO-I Antidepressants

The monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAO-Is) [Nardil (phenelzine); Parnate (tranylcypromine)] are used in the treatment of depression, and can improve overall mood, ability to concentrate, sleep and eating patterns, and physical activity. In addition, these agents may be useful in anxiety disorders.

Like any medication, MAO-Is can cause some side effects, including:

Common

dizziness
sexual dysfunction
trembling
insomnia

Less Common

swelling of legs/feet
dry mouth
restlessness
weight gain

Rare

slurred speech
agitation
liver problems

*Dietary restriction of foods containing **tyramine** is necessary when taking an MAO-I antidepressant to prevent the following symptoms:*

severe headache
stiff neck
flushing
rapid heart rate
sweating
nausea, vomiting

Restricted foods containing tyramine include:

aged cheeses-*cheddar, bleu, swiss*
smoked or pickled meats-*sausage, corned beef, salami, pepperoni, herring*
aged meats/fish/poultry-*liver, pate*
yeast extracts-*Brewer's yeast*
red wines-*chianti, burgundy*
fava beans

Antidepressant medications work gradually, and may take up to several weeks to reach their full beneficial effect. Don't lose patience; it will take time before you will feel better.

Remember, these medications must be taken regularly to have their full beneficial effect.