

Clinical Toolkit

Clinical Tips: Checklist Before Prescribing SSRIs in Young People

Prescribing antidepressant medication in young people should not be undertaken lightly. Use this checklist to make sure that everything has been covered before you prescribe.

1. Diagnosis

- Confirmed diagnosis & stability of symptoms
- Used a valid tool to support this (e.g. PHQ-9)
- Considered differential diagnoses
- Assessed for comorbidities
- Assessed for any history of hypomania or mania (risk of inducing manic episode when commencing SSRI)

- Considered need for a psychiatric opinion

2. Considered stepped treatment

- Completed an adequate trial of psychological treatment
- The SSRI is being offered as an adjunct to psychological therapy (i.e. combined therapy)

3. Shared decision making and informed consent

- Explained the benefits and harms of SSRIs
- Explained delayed effect, duration of treatment
- Explained discontinuation symptoms

- Particularly discussed increased risk of self-harm or suicidality and hostility when commencing an SSRI

- Explained interactions with medication, alcohol, drugs

- Discussed any concerns the young person may have about taking an SSRI

4. Assessed risk and safety

- Adequately assessed risk
- Limited access to medication (if significant risk)
- Developed a safety plan

5. Adequate monitoring

- Organised weekly monitoring
- Assessing risk
- Assessing adherence
- Assessing side effects

6. Involved family and friends as appropriate

- Assessment, treatment decisions and monitoring as appropriate



Have you given adequate time for everyone to properly reflect on the above information and discuss any concerns prior to commencing an SSRI?