

ask



Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q *I am a 30-year-old software consultant working full time and happily married. About 12 months ago I suffered depression in the context of work stress. Upon consultation with a psychiatrist I was treated with an antidepressant name Fludac. After taking it for 2 months I recovered and now enjoy reasonable good moods. I have been stable and well for the past 8 months and now wish to stop medication. I fear a relapse into depression upon stopping the tablets. Please advice.*

There is no specific guideline for the duration of treatment for depression. It often depends on the individual's vulnerability (family history of depression, personality characteristics, coping mechanism, support network, stressors, etc.). Another important factor is the nature and degree of the depressive episode. Duration of treatment is often a clinical decision.

Practice based evidence suggests that for the first episode one would need to take antidepressants for up to 5 - 6 months after clinical response to treatment. If the patient has remained symptom-free for the above duration then attempt can be made to taper down the dose and stop. For those with two or more episodes of depression, it is advisable to take the medicine for a duration of 12 – 24 months. Any further recurrence may warrant medication for up to five years or even indefinitely. In all cases, the individual should receive minimal required dose during the maintenance phase (when they are stable and well, and have minimal or no effects of depression) and medication should be reviewed regularly. Effort must be made to wean off medication

following risk benefit analysis at clinical consultation.

You are taking Fludac. It contains a drug called fluoxetine (belongs to a group of new antidepressant called SSRI). It's an effective and safe medication, but is ideally taken only for the needed time. I suggest you see your psychiatrist for discussing the option of discontinuing the tablet. Even after discontinuing medication, it will be advisable to continue consultation for monitoring your moods, and restart the tablet should there be a recurrence of depression.

Q *I am a 17-year-old Computer Science student in Bangalore. I live in a shared hostel room. My family is from northeast India. Being overweight, I am bullied by fellow students. This has dented my confidence and made me isolative. For three months a senior from the college has been phoning me regularly and hurling abuses. I feel harassed for no fault of mine. I don't sleep well, frequently wake up fearful, and have lost interest in everything, including study. I feel gloomy, frustrated and troubled by suicidal thoughts. Other than a cousin locally, I have no other family. Please advice.*

Got a question for Dr Roshan Jain? drop a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com or Write to:

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Firstly, you seem quite brave and a person with aspirations who has decided to pursue their interest and education far from home. I want to congratulate you for that. It's not uncommon for someone in your situation to feel lonely and isolated, and even wake up fearful. I am sure that the bullying and harassment is adding to your difficulties. Other problems described include depressed mood, pessimism, irritability, frustration, and loss of interest. These are suggestive of clinical depression.

Unsurprisingly, you have negative thoughts including suicidal ideas. The fact that these thoughts trouble you, seem to me that you have no plans to act on your thoughts. Asking for help and advice is the first step to rehabilitation and recovery from your problems. You seem keen to overcome your difficulties. If these thoughts get more intense then I suggest you urgently take yourself to a doctor and get the needed treatment that may include calming tablets, support, assurance, and/or regular antidepressants. You should ideally see a psychiatrist, as your symptoms would warrant medication and counselling. Perhaps formal psychotherapy (talking therapy) will help you in becoming more assertive and confident, thereby better able to deal with change, adversity and depression.

I would recommend you to seek the support of your cousin in dealing with telephone harassment. Hopefully, he can attempt to help you understand the reasons behind it, and if required, speak with your seniors. Perhaps involvement of college authorities and /or police will help in finding a permanent solution.