

Plain Language Summary Serotonin Syndrome

Title: Why is my SSRI making me SShaky?

Name: Chika Nwulu

Plain Language Summary:

First of all what is an SSRI? It stands for Selective-Serotonin-Reuptake-Inhibitor. It is a class of medicines that are used to treat depression and anxiety. The medicine works by allowing a certain chemical called serotonin to build up in your body. Serotonin is needed to transmit electrical impulses in your brain and along your nerves. Serotonin is both produced and destroyed by normal body physiology.

Sometimes, however, if you take too much of your SSRI or if you take another medicine in addition to your SSRI, there can be an interaction and you may end up with too much serotonin in your body.

When this happens, you can have the following symptoms:

- Shakiness
- Tremors
- Sweating
- Flushed skin



There is no way to predict if you will develop these symptoms, however, taking an SSRI in combination with other drugs that increased serotonin, like trazadone, might put you at increased risk.

If you find yourself with the above symptoms you should immediately stop your serotonin medications and call your doctor right away because you may be at risk for developing a more severe symptoms such as the following:

- Muscle rigidity
- Hyperthermia (high fever)
- ARDS (breathing difficulty)
- Seizures

If you are at home and you are having the above symptoms, you should go to the emergency department as soon as possible because this indicates you have had a serious serotonin poisoning. In the emergency department you may be treated with an antidote or be given supportive treatment to prevent complications.

Additional Resources:

Serotonin Syndrome <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/serotonin-syndrome/DS00860>

SSRIs <http://www.webmd.com/depression/ssris-myths-and-facts-about-antidepressants>

Key Words:

Serotonin Syndrome

SSRI

Overdose

Neurotransmitter

Drug Interaction

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