

Prescribing Tip For Information

Antidepressant dose changes and suicidal risk

LSCFT has recently circulated advice for healthcare professionals around the increased risk of suicide, self-harm and/or hostility when patients have their dose of antidepressant changed.



Greenlights provide important updates about medicines management issues for all clinical staff.

Welcome to Greenlight Issue 107 – January 2023

1. Suicidal behaviour and antidepressant dose changes

It is well-known that antidepressants may cause suicidal thoughts/behaviours particularly in at-risk groups such as children, young adults and patients with a history of suicidal behaviour. Clinicians therefore understand the need for additional monitoring, particularly at the beginning of treatment. What is perhaps less recognised is this risk also occurs when the dose of antidepressants is changed, either increased, reduced or by non-compliance with therapy. This increased risk of suicide, self-harm and/or hostility, following antidepressant dose changes, has been cited as a potential contributory factor in several serious incidents involving LSCFT service users. Healthcare professionals are asked to consider this increased risk for all service users prescribed antidepressants following any intended or unintended dose changes.

[NICE guideline \[NG222\]](#) Depression in adults: treatment and management

1.2.11 Advise a person with depression and their family or carer to be vigilant for:

- Mood changes
 - agitation
 - negativity / hopelessness
 - suicidal ideation
- and to contact their practitioner if concerned. **This is particularly important during high-risk periods, such as starting or changing treatment.**

The LSCFT [Choice and Medication website](#) provides information about medicines used in the mental health setting. Here, healthcare professionals can access useful information on starting medication, when and how to increase doses, along with how to safely reduce and stop antidepressants.



For patients, the charity [Mind](#) offers information, support and signposting advice for those who may be at risk of developing suicidal feelings.

If you have any suggestions for future topics to cover in our prescribing tips, please contact Nicola.schaffel@nhs.net