

## Serotonin Withdrawal

Symptoms described as “brain zaps” or “brain shocks” are a withdrawal symptom experienced during discontinuation (or reduction of dose) of antidepressant drugs that involve serotonin. Another common sign of this is an off balance feeling as if your eyes are not focusing or your balance is off especially when moving your head.

Other symptoms include dizziness, electric shock-like sensations, sweating, nausea, insomnia, tremor, confusion, nightmares.

Common serotonin medicines include:

SSRIs: fluoxetine (prozac), paroxetine (paxil)\*, fluvoxamine (luvox)\*, sertraline (zoloft), citalopram (celexa), escitalopram (lexapro).

SNRIs: venlafaxine (effexor)\*, desvenlafaxine (pristiq), duloxetine (cymbalta)\*, milnacipran (savella) and levomilnacipran (fetzima).

New Serotonergics: vilazodone (viibryd), vortioxetine (brintellix).

\*These are more likely to cause withdrawal symptoms

The syndrome is sometimes treatable by substituting the antidepressant with fluoxetine (prozac) or vortioxetine (brintellix). These antidepressants come out of the body slowly so aren't as prone to withdrawal symptoms.

—Chris Aiken, M.D., Updated 1/25/2015