What You Should Know About
“Serotonin Syndrome”

Serotonin Syndrome is a rare, but potentially severe condition caused by an increase in serotonin, a chemical found naturally in all of our bodies. This condition can be caused by the use of medicines that increase levels of serotonin in the brain, which include several types of antidepressants.

Of these, SSRI antidepressants are most commonly prescribed, and include: citalopram, escitalopram, fluoxetine, paroxetine and sertraline and the SNRI antidepressants, venlafaxine and duloxetine. Other substances that may contribute include: cocaine, lithium, ecstasy, amphetamines, LSD, St John’s Wort and opioid pain killers, e.g. codeine and tramadol.

Serotonin syndrome is most likely to happen within 24 hours after:
- you start taking a drug that increases serotonin levels
- the dose of that drug is increased

Some signs that you might have serotonin syndrome are:
- Shakiness
- Twitching or stiff muscles
- Shivering
- Agitation or restlessness
- Confusion
- Hallucinations
- Racing heartbeat
- Very high or very low blood pressure
- Goose bumps
- Diarrhea, nausea, or vomiting
- Large pupils

Some signs of serotonin syndrome that are very serious are:
- High fever
- Heavy sweating
- Severe muscle spasms or rigid muscles
- Seizures
- Uneven heartbeat
- Passing out

Call your prescriber right away or go to the emergency room if you think you have serotonin syndrome. Do not wait if you feel really bad or if you are getting worse. Be sure to bring all of the medicines you are taking. Or bring a complete list of them. Include vitamins and supplements. This can help your prescriber figure out if you have serotonin syndrome.

© BEYOND THE BRAIN www.beyondthebrain.net