

The top ten medicines prescribed in Australia in 2020–21

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Credit: Christina Victoria Craft/Unsplash

A depression medicine has climbed the list and two antibiotics have dropped in the top 10 prescribed medicines lists of 2020–21. In the December edition of *Australian Prescriber*, the top 10 list of medicines

prescribed in Australia for 2020–21 is revealed.

In the top 10 list of government-subsidized medicines from July 2020 to June 2021, eight of the most used medicines were for cholesterol lowering and blood pressure lowering. The other two medicines in the top 10 were sertraline which is used to treat depression and anxiety, and metformin for diabetes.

"It is not surprising that the most pills dispensed were to prevent and treat [heart disease](#) and stroke. Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in Australia," says Dr. Kate Annear, Medical Advisor at NPS MedicineWise and GP.

"Sertraline was new to the top 10 list last year and has moved up to No. 8 this year. This is a reflection of the increasingly high volume of antidepressants being prescribed in Australia.

"We are seeing more people experiencing depression and anxiety disorders, many of these for the first time. The COVID pandemic has likely had an impact on this," she says.

Another way of looking at the top 10 list of medicines is through the number of prescriptions written.

"Also in this list, the top two medicines are cholesterol-lowering statin medicines. We also see medicines for acid reflux and two medicines to treat depression and anxiety," says Dr. Annear.

"The antibiotic cephalexin dropped from 6th to 9th and the antibiotic amoxicillin dropped off the top 10 altogether.

"This is good news as prescribing [antibiotics](#) when they are not needed is driving [antibiotic resistance](#).

"This continues a [downward trend](#) in [antibiotic use](#) over the last years, but Australia still has high use—more than double that of some European countries," she says.

More information: Top 10 drugs 2021-21, *Australian Prescriber* (2021). [DOI: 10.18773/austprescr.2021.062](https://doi.org/10.18773/austprescr.2021.062)

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