

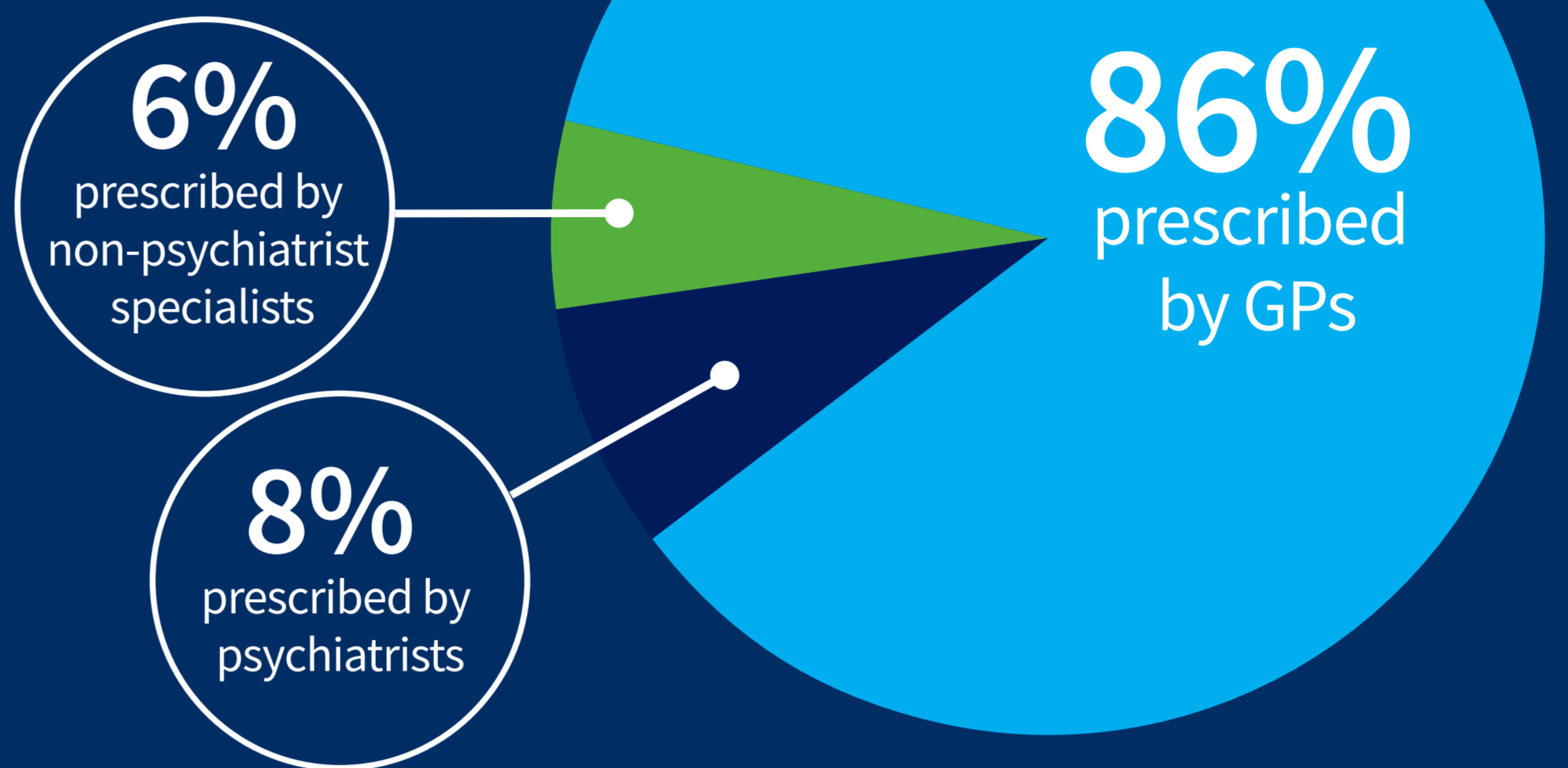
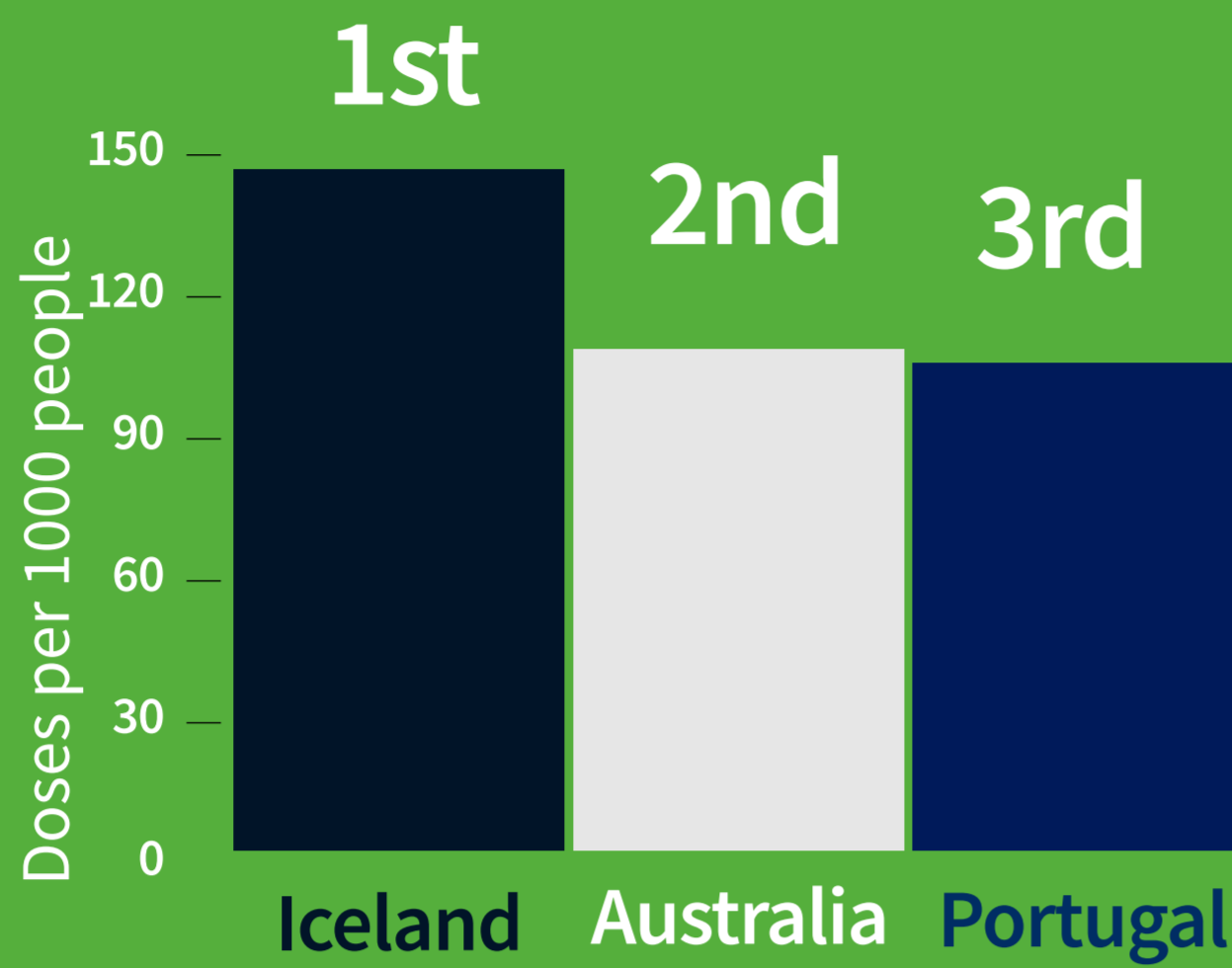
# Antidepressant use in Australia: a snapshot



Over three million (or 1 in 7) Australian adults take antidepressants daily for depression and anxiety.

In 2019, there were 27 million prescriptions provided for antidepressants across Australia, with 86% of those written by GPs, 8% prescribed by psychiatrists and 6% by non-psychiatrist specialists.

Australia is the second highest consumer of antidepressants of all OECD countries

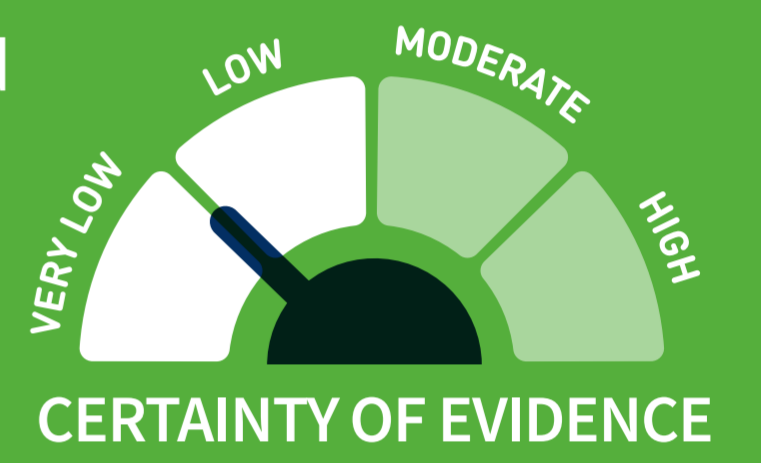


Guidelines typically recommend that antidepressants should be taken up to 6-12 months after improvement, or for up to 2 years in people at risk of relapse, but many people take antidepressants for much longer.

Common side effects of long term antidepressant use include weight gain, sleep disturbance, emotional numbing, undermining of coping strategies, gastrointestinal problems (eg diarrhoea, constipation), and feelings of being 'addicted'.

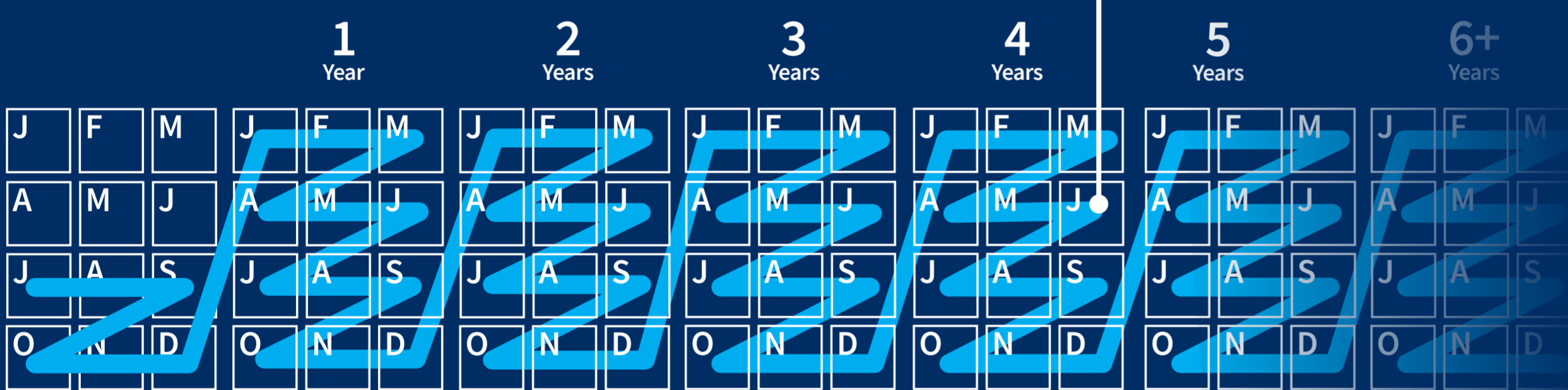


A new Cochrane review looked at approaches to stopping long-term antidepressant use and found little high quality evidence available on how and when people can safely and effectively discontinue this treatment.



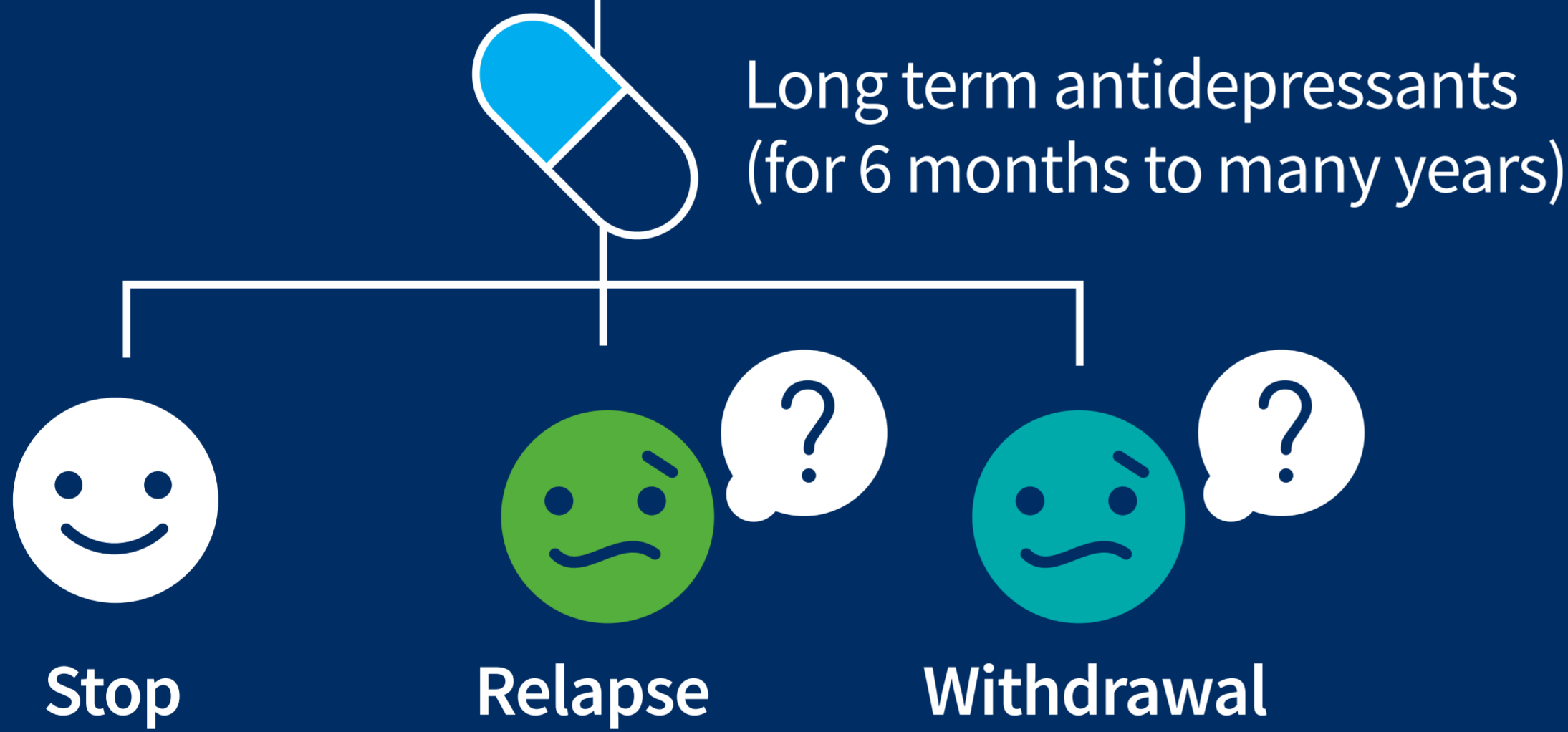
## Antidepressant usage duration

The average duration for adults on antidepressants in Australia is four years.



The review found that the key challenge for researchers, mental health professionals and people taking antidepressants is distinguishing between withdrawal symptoms and a return (or relapse) of depression or anxiety. **More and better studies are urgently needed to identify safe and effective approaches to stopping.**

Access the full review online in the Cochrane Library: [Approaches for discontinuation vs continuation of long-term antidepressant use for depression and anxiety in adults](#)  
Published April 2021



Cognitive impairment	Trouble sleeping	Lowered mood	Anxiety	Appetite change	Dizziness vertigo & nausea	Tremors, spasms & zaps	Sexual dysfunction
○	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Relapse (Green dots)  
Withdrawal (Blue dots)