

# Drugs for Antipsychotics



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## **Definition of Antipsychotics**

Since 1952, Chlorpromazine was launched as an innovative treatment which was succeeded by further introduction of other antipsychotics with different chemical structures. Antipsychotics are used mainly for the treatment of hallucinations, delirium, incoherent excitement or behavioural changes associated with schizophrenia, they are also indicated for the control of mania and prophylaxis on relapse of psychosis.

## **Mechanism of Antipsychotics**

Conventional antipsychotics act on the central nervous system by blocking the dopamine receptors, which may give rise to different side effects including "extrapyramidal effects" and "endocrine effects" described below.

## **What are their side-effects?**

### ***1. Extrapyramidal Effects***

Conventional antipsychotics therapy may develop extrapyramidal symptoms (EPS) including tremor, muscle stiffness, and restlessness. Besides, some long-term users may experience change in muscle tonicity leading to rhythmic, involuntary movements of face, jaw or limbs.

### ***2. Endocrine effects***

As part of their effect on the pituitary glands, painful menstruation may occur in women as well as abnormal production and secretion of breast milk.

### ***3. Other side effects***

Include fatigue, somnolence, weight gain, dizziness, purplish pigmentation of the skin, abnormal liver function tests (jaundice), and cardiovascular symptoms such as hypotension, ECG changes and arrhythmias.

### ***4. Effects on Pregnancy***

Based on data accumulated over the years, there is no known teratogenic effect. However, it is always recommended to seek advice from your doctor before planning for conception.

## **Clinical use:**

Antipsychotics therapy is based on diagnosis, aetiology and individual's conditions, different drugs formulations are available such as oral, injections and long-acting depot injections. These broad spectrum antipsychotics are safe, effective and their side-effects can be minimized through dosage adjustment, using alternative drug or addition of adjunctive drugs.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *May I stop taking my medicine?*

It is necessary to take your medicine promptly in order to control your illness. According to scientific research, the rates of relapse increase drastically if one is not taking their medications. If you disregard your condition, your chance of recovery would be lessened.

### *What to do before taking my medication?*

Before taking your medication, you must always ensure whether the medicine belongs to you, always follow your doctor's instructions, and those on the pharmacy label. You should never change the prescribed dosage or stop your medication without your doctor's direction. And never take two doses at the same time if you forget to take a dose.

### *How to deal with side effects?*

Talk to your doctor if you experience any side effects. Your doctor may adjust the dosage in order to minimize the adverse effects. Do not stop taking your medicine without your doctor's direction.

### *How long do I need to take my medicine?*

The duration of therapy varies according to the types and severities of illness. Generally speaking, patients with schizophrenia, particularly those with a history of relapse, need to take their medications for a longer period of time. But if your condition is stable, your doctor may adjust the dosage to the minimal-effective dose to control your illness. What should the care-givers do if patients refuse to take their medications? Do not criticize the patients. Try to find out the underlying reason for their refusal e.g. if the patients experience any undesirable side effects or have any necessary concern about their medications, etc. Encouragement from the family and comprehensive explanation of their drug treatment is crucial. Contact the healthcare professionals if the patients still refuse to take the medications

### *What should the care-givers do if patients refuse to take their medications?*

Do not criticize the patients. Try to find out the underlying reason for their refusal e.g. if the patients experience any undesirable side effects or have any necessary worry about their medications, etc. Encouragement from the family and comprehensive explanation of their drug treatment is crucial. Contact the healthcare professionals if the patients still refuse to take the medications.

<b><u>DO</u></b>	
1.	Strictly follow the doctor's instructions
2.	Pay attention to the drug name, dosage and frequency, etc. before taking your medication
3.	Read the prescription label carefully
4.	Pay attention to the dosage, indication, contraindication and side effects
5.	Understand the method of administration
6.	Store your medication properly
7.	Complete the prescribed course unless otherwise directed
8.	If you have any questions, talk to your family and ask your health care professionals

<b><u>DON'Ts</u></b>	
1.	Change the dosage of your medication on your own
2.	Stop taking your medication except on your doctor's advice.
3.	Drink alcohol with your medication.
4.	Put your medication in other bottle.
5.	Take other medication unless directed by your doctor.
6.	Lie to your doctors about your compliance