

Antipsychotics - Long-Acting Injectable

What are long-acting injectable antipsychotics?

These medicines are a slow-release type of antipsychotic (say *an-tee-sy-kot-ick*) given by injection.

These medicines are used to treat symptoms of psychosis (say *sigh-ko-sis*) such as hearing voices or false beliefs.

Psychosis can occur in different types of illnesses such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. They can also be used to stabilize a person's mood.

You are taking this medicine for:

☐ Schizophrenia ☐ Bipolar Disorder

☐ Other: _____

You are taking:

☐ Aripiprazole (say: *air-i-plawr-prom-uh-zeen*)

☐ Flupentixol (say: *flew-pen-ticks-ol*)

☐ Haloperidol (say: *ha-luh-peh-ru-dal*)

☐ Paliperidone (say: *pal-uh-peer-add-own*)

☐ Risperidone (say: *ris-speer-add-own*)

☐ Zuclopenthixol (say: *zoo-clo-pen-thick-sol*)

How do antipsychotics work?

Schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and other types of mental illnesses can develop when the chemicals in your brain are out-of-balance.

These medicines work by restoring the balance of the brain's chemicals. This can help reduce:

- Hallucinations - feeling unusual body sensations; hearing, seeing, smelling or tasting things that are not real.
- Delusions - feeling that someone is following you or trying to hurt you; feeling that people are talking about you; or feeling that you have special powers or are famous.

They can also help:

- improve your mood, sleep, and concentration
- reduce the amount of harmful thoughts
- make you feel more calm and less fearful

Why a long-acting injectable antipsychotic?

The injectable form has the same medicine as the pill form. When injected, the medicine slowly releases into the blood over several weeks, so the effect lasts longer. We also call it a "depot injection".

These medicines are usually given every 2 to 4 weeks. Some can be given every 3 months.

Getting your antipsychotic by injection can help:

- Reduce the chances of your symptoms or illness returning
- Simplify the daily medicine routine with taking fewer pills
- Reduce the stress of remembering to take medicine every day or visiting a pharmacy every day for the medicine
- Give the body a more steady level of medicine

You will get your injection every: _____

How will I get the injection?

You will get the injection in either the upper arm or buttock.

You might be asked to wait 10 to 15 minutes afterwards to make sure you do not have any unwanted reactions.

Your doctor will let you know where to go for the injections. It might be given by a member of your mental health team, your doctor, or a pharmacist during pharmacy visits.

When you first start with injections, you might also need to take the medicine in pill form for a few weeks. This allows the injected medicine time to start working. Your doctor will tell you if you need to do this.

How quickly will my medicine start working?

Some symptoms might improve before others:

- Over the first few weeks, you might find that you sleep better and have fewer mood swings.
- Over the next 2 to 8 weeks, hallucinations or delusions fade away and your thoughts become clearer.
- Over the next 3 to 6 months, you should feel the full benefits of the medicine.

What should I look out for?

Here are some possible side effects and what to do if you notice them.

Common Side Effects



Pain at the injection site

Your arm or buttock (depending on where you get the injection) might be sore or red for a few days. Ask your doctor if it is safe to take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for pain.



Increased cholesterol and/or blood sugar

Your doctor will monitor your cholesterol and blood sugar and adjust your medicines as needed. Healthy foods and exercise can help decrease cholesterol and blood sugar.



Dizziness

Take your time getting up from a sitting or lying position. Do not stand up too quickly. Keep well hydrated by drinking fluids. Water is best. Limit how much alcohol you drink.



Too much prolactin

(a hormone normally in your body)
Speak to your doctor or pharmacist if you have:

- irregular periods
- breasts get larger, get painful, or produce milk
- a change in or no interest in sex



Drowsiness

Caution: It is dangerous to drive or operate machinery until you know how this medicine affects you.



Unusual body movements – called extrapyramidal (say *extra-per-ah-mid- a/*) symptoms

Let your doctor know if:

- You feel restless or cannot stay still (called akathisia - say *ak-ah-thee-zee-ah*).
- Your hands shake or your body feels stiff and slow (called Parkinsonism - say *park-in-so-niz-im*).



Weight gain

Choose healthy foods Exercise regularly. Drink water instead of sugary drinks like pop.

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Rare but Serious Side Effects

Blood clot

Antipsychotics can increase the chances of blood clots forming. Early symptoms include swelling, pain, redness, and warmth of one leg. Serious symptoms include shortness of breath, chest pain, fainting, and/or weakness to one half of the body.

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome

Any antipsychotic can cause this very rare side effect. Symptoms include a very high fever, sweating, fast heartbeat, rapid breathing, changes in blood pressure, rigid or stiff muscles, and confusion.

Why is it important to keep taking it?

- Go to all your injection appointments. It is important to keep a steady level of the medicine in your body.
- If you do not get your regular injections, the amount of medicine in your body can get too low and your symptoms can return or worsen. Talk to your doctor before you stop the injections.

When should I get help?

See your doctor as soon as possible if you notice any of these:

- Your symptoms are getting worse or returning.
- You are feeling hopeless, or you feel that there is no way to solve the problem or end the pain.
- Any of the common side effects do not go away or are getting worse over time.

Go to the nearest Emergency Department right away or call 9-1-1 if any of these happen:

- You feel like acting on thoughts of harming yourself and/or others.
- You notice *any* of the rare but serious side effects on page 2.

What else should I know?

- **Allergy alert:** The liquid in the injection might contain sesame oil or coconut oil. If you have an allergy to nuts, tell the person before they give you the injection.
- Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking **any of these** because they can change how this medicine works or cause unwanted side effects:
 - new prescription medicines
 - medicines you buy without a prescription
 - supplements
 - herbal medicines
 - natural health products
- Your doctor's office, mental health team, or pharmacy will keep this medicine for you.

It's good to ask questions

Anytime you have any questions or concerns about taking this medicine, talk with one of your healthcare team.

Call 8-1-1 (HealthLinkBC) after hours and for any other health advice.

HealthLinkBC is open 24 hours a day and available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.