

If you experience any other side effects not in the table, discuss them with your doctor.

Pharmacists and experts in medicine can also help with information on side effects caused by antipsychotic medicines; however any medication changes should only be made by your doctor.

Friends and family are important for support and care but may not have the accurate answers for your questions. Every patient is different. Therefore, not all information available on the internet is accurate and specific to your illness.

Keep a record of your symptoms and any side effects from your medicine. Take these notes when you visit your doctor and ask questions if you need more information about how your antipsychotic medicine is working for you.

The Medimate brochure, which is available in a number of languages, can help you understand and use antipsychotics, or other medicines, in partnership with your doctor. This brochure and other useful information are available at the National Prescribing Service Medicinewise (NPS) website: [www.nps.org.au/translated-health-information-about-medicines](http://www.nps.org.au/translated-health-information-about-medicines).

### What else should I know about taking antipsychotic medicines?

You should arrange to see your doctor at least every six months to monitor your general physical health. You should try to avoid extremely hot and humid weather. Antipsychotic medicines can affect your body's ability to cope with extremely hot temperatures.

You should also avoid drinking alcohol (wine, beer, and spirits including cocktails) when taking antipsychotic medicines. Antipsychotic medicines can increase the effects of alcohol.

Cigarette smoking can also affect your antipsychotic medicine. You should talk to your doctor if you smoke cigarettes. It is important that your doctor knows of any change to the amount of cigarettes that you smoke.

You should also avoid taking any other drugs (for example cannabis, amphetamines or injecting drugs) when you are taking antipsychotic medicines. Other drugs can make your symptoms worse.

You need to talk to your doctor if you are planning on having a baby. If you are already pregnant, you need to contact your doctor immediately. You must also tell your doctor if you are breastfeeding when taking antipsychotic medicines.

Do not share your antipsychotic medicines with anyone else. Your medicine has been prescribed for your symptoms and to suit your medical history. Antipsychotic medicines may be harmful to someone else. If someone you know seems to have similar symptoms to you, encourage them to visit the doctor.

### What if I need help speaking English?

Ask for an interpreter if you have difficulty communicating with your doctor or pharmacist. A professional interpreter should be used rather than a family member or friend. They are trained in understanding medical terms and are required to keep information confidential.

Your doctor or pharmacist can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450. This service is free and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

*This brochure contains general information and does not include all possible side effects or all brand names of medications.*

### What are antipsychotic medicines?

Antipsychotic medicines are medicines used to treat types of mental illnesses called psychotic illness.

### What are psychotic illnesses?

Psychotic illnesses are mental illnesses that affect the way people think, feel and behave. People with psychotic illnesses may have problems with identifying what is really happening and what is not really happening. Symptoms of psychotic illnesses occur in different kinds of mental disorders including bipolar disorder, depression, psychosis related to illicit drug use and schizophrenia.

People who have psychotic illness may have any of the following symptoms:

- **Hallucinations:** A person who has hallucinations sees, hears, feels, smells or tastes something that is not actually there. An example of a hallucination is hearing voices that no one else can hear.
- **Delusions:** A person who is experiencing delusions has beliefs that are not true. For example, the person may believe that someone else is reading their thoughts.
- **Disorganised thoughts:** A person with disorganised thoughts may not be able to think clearly.

Antipsychotic medicines can help to control these symptoms.

### What are the types of antipsychotic medicines?

There are two main types of antipsychotic medicines:

1. **Typical:** These are older antipsychotic medicines.
2. **Atypical:** These are newer antipsychotic medicines.

Your doctor will talk to you to decide what type of antipsychotic medicine will be best for you.

*Examples of antipsychotic medicines:*

#### “Typical” Antipsychotics

Chlorpromazine	(Largactil™)
Flupenthixol	(Fluanxol™)
Fluphenazine	(Modecate™)
Haloperidol	(Serenace™) (Haldol™)
Trifluoperazine	(Stelazine™)
Zuclopenthixol	(Clopixol™)

#### “Atypical” Antipsychotics

Amisulpride	(Solian™)
Aripiprazole	(Abilify™)
Clozapine	(Clopine™) (Clozaril™)
Olanzapine	(Zyprexa™)
Paliperidone	(Invega™)
Quetiapine	(Seroquel™)
Risperidone	(Risperdal™)
Ziprasidone	(Zeldox™)

### What does my doctor need to know to prescribe me with antipsychotic medicines?

Tell your doctor as much information as possible about your symptoms and medical history, and how much you smoke and drink alcohol, and whether you take any illicit drugs. It is important that your doctor knows about any illnesses that you have or have had in the past, such as cardiovascular disease, or any medicines that you are taking.

## How do antipsychotic medicines work?

Your brain makes natural chemicals that are important for your brain to work. People who have psychotic illnesses may have an imbalance in their amount of brain chemicals. Antipsychotic medicines help to restore the healthy amount and balance of these brain chemicals.

## How do I take antipsychotic medicines?

Your doctor will talk to you about the best way for you to take your medicine. Most antipsychotic medicines are tablets. If you are taking antipsychotic medicine as a tablet, you will need to take your medicine every day.

Some antipsychotic medicines are given as injections. The injection causes the medicine to be released slowly in your body.

Your doctor will talk to you about the best time of day for you to take your medicine. A routine is important to help you to remember to take your medicine. For example, it may help you to always take your medicine in the evening after brushing your teeth or before going to bed.

## What amount of medicine will I take?

Your doctor will tell you the amount or dose of antipsychotic medicine to take. You must take the correct dose of your medicine. Do not change the dose of medicine that you take.

## What happens if I forget to take my medicine?

If you forget to take your antipsychotic medicine you should take it only if you remember within a few hours of the usual time.

If you do not remember to take your antipsychotic medicine within a few hours of your usual time, wait until your next dose is due and take only the normal amount or dose. Do not try to catch up by doubling the amount.

## Can I stop taking my medicine if I start to feel well?

If you start to feel well, you should talk to your doctor. Continue taking your medicine at the prescribed dose until you talk to your doctor. Do not stop taking your medicine or change the dose of medicine that you take without talking to your doctor.

Many people that take antipsychotic medicines will continue to take them for months or even years to ensure that they stay well.

If you have any concerns about your antipsychotic medicine, you should talk to your doctor.

## How long does it take for antipsychotic medicines to work?

Some people will have an improvement in some of their symptoms within a week of starting antipsychotic medicine. However, it can take between six weeks to several months for the medicine to be effective.

## Can I take other medicines with antipsychotic medicines?

Antipsychotic medicines can affect the way other medicines work. You must tell your doctor about any other medicines that you take. Other medicines include any medicines prescribed by any doctor as well as any medicines that you have purchased without a prescription.

You must also tell your doctor about any herbal or traditional medicines that you take. These may affect how your antipsychotic medicine works.

Your doctor may also prescribe other types of medicine for you to take with your antipsychotic medicine to help with any other symptoms. For example, your doctor may prescribe you medicines to help with anxiety or sleep problems.

## What side effects can I experience when taking antipsychotic medicines?

A side effect is an unwanted reaction to taking a medicine. Most medicines have side effects, although the severity of side effects will vary between different people. They are likely to decrease in severity or disappear after a few weeks.

You should always tell your doctor if you think you are having any side effects from your antipsychotic medicine. Your doctor can tell you more information about managing side effects of your medicine. Atypical antipsychotic medicines and typical antipsychotic medicines have different side effects.

Possible side effects and ways to manage them are shown below: **Please talk to your doctor if you experience any of these side effects**

## What are some of the common side-effects I might experience?

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS	WHAT TO DO
Feeling sleepy	Your doctor may recommend taking most of your medicine at night. You may also be advised not to drive or operate machinery.
Muscle stiffness, restlessness or involuntary movements (e.g. abnormal movements of your tongue, mouth, fingers or feet).	You may require additional medicine to help reduce these side effects.
Dry mouth	Sucking on ice cubes can increase the saliva in your mouth. Drink water and brush your teeth regularly. Some "cold and flu" medicines may make dry mouth worse.
Weight gain	Maintain a healthy diet and avoid foods that are high in fat or sugar. Try not to have snacks between meals. Regular exercise is an important part of your daily routine particularly when you are on any antipsychotic medications.
Blurred vision	This can occur when you first start taking antipsychotic medicine. If your blurred vision does not improve after 1-2 weeks, talk to your doctor.
Dizziness	Take care when standing up. For example, if you are lying down and wish to stand up, make sure that you first move to a sitting position. Remain in the sitting position for several minutes before attempting to stand. If the problem continues, see your doctor.
Changes in sexual ability or desire	Counselling and certain medicines can be prescribed to help improve sexual dysfunction.
Constipation (difficulty emptying the bowels due to hard faeces)	Make sure that your diet includes lots of fibre by eating wholegrain breads and cereals, fruit and vegetables. Drink plenty of water and exercise regularly. It is important to talk to your doctor if this continues.
Nausea (feeling sick) or indigestion	Take your antipsychotic medicine with food. If you are fasting, talk to your doctor about how to take your medicine. If you are taking your medicine with food and the nausea continues, talk to your doctor. Your doctor may prescribe other medicines to help. Some nausea medicines bought over the counter in pharmacies should not be used while you are taking antipsychotic medicines.