

STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND  
ADDICTION SERVICES

**MEDICATION INFORMATION MANUAL**



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State of New Jersey  
Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services Medication  
Information Manual

**Preface**

The Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) Medication Information Manual (Manual) is a guide to the most commonly prescribed medications. It is intended to assist caregivers and consumers in understanding the nature, purpose and possible side effects of each medicine. This information should also assist prescribing clinicians in the process of obtaining informed consent.

This Manual is not intended to replace a frank and detailed discussion about the proposed medication between the prescribing clinician and the consumer (and guardian, if applicable). The information given is not exhaustive and does not attempt to cover every issue involving a given medication. If a consumer has questions or concerns about a medication he or she is taking, it is always best to contact the prescribing clinician to discuss the specific issue. In particular, since many people see more than one doctor (for example, a primary care physician in addition to a psychiatrist), it is very important for the consumer to make sure that the prescribing clinician(s) are aware of all the medications currently being prescribed so that potential drug interactions can be assessed. This manual, as well as additional information, may be found at the DMHAS website: <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dmhas/home/>.

Medication is just one element of a comprehensive health program. Exercise, diet, regular medical care, and appropriate counseling are other important parts of an overall plan to stay as healthy as possible. Consumers should work with their providers to address all of these issues.

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The information, opinions and recommendations presented in this Manual are presented in summary form and are intended to provide individuals only with a broad understanding and knowledge of certain medications. Users of the Manual should verify and update the information, opinions and recommendations independently. NOTHING CONTAINED IN THE MANUAL IS, OR SHOULD BE, CONSIDERED OR USED AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL ADVICE, DIAGNOSIS OR TREATMENT. The DMHAS does not endorse, approve, recommend or certify any information, medication, method of treatment, or company presented or mentioned in the Manual. The Manual is not intended to replace, and does not replace, the specialized training and professional judgment of a licensed health care or mental health care professional. Individuals should seek the advice of a physician or other health care provider with any questions regarding medications, personal health or medical conditions.

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### **Antipsychotics (older agents)**

Chlorpromazine (Thorazine)	Molindone (Moban)
Fluphenazine (Prolixin)	Perphenazine (Trilafon)
Haloperidol (Haldol)	Thiothixene (Navane)
Loxapine (Loxitane)	Trifluoperazine (Stelazine)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are called antipsychotic medications. They have been shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). These medications may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. They may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid, and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. These medications may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are sedation, muscle stiffness, tremors, slowed muscle movements, muscle spasms, restlessness, dizziness, constipation, dry mouth, blurry vision, weight gain, upset stomach, body heat regulation problems. Some patients taking these medications may experience trouble staying cool in hot weather. This can be dangerous during heat waves or excessive physical activity. Be sure to drink plenty of fluids, such as water, and stay in cooler areas.

**Less common** side effects include stuffy nose, difficulty passing urine, low blood pressure, unusually fast or uneven heartbeat, impotence, breast enlargement, loss of menstrual cycle, sensitivity to the sun, difficulty swallowing, seizures.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually, it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. Often, these movements are in your tongue, mouth and face, but they can happen in other parts of your body, like your arms or legs, or even rarely in the muscles that help you breathe. You may not notice these movements, although others around you may notice them. You should also understand that these movements might not go away, even if the medication is stopped. The risk for this side effect increases the longer you are treated with an



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antipsychotic medication and the older you are.

***Neuroleptic malignant syndrome*** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

***Haloperidol Decanoate Injection*** is medication injected into a muscle. This medication is the long-acting form of haloperidol and is usually administered once every four weeks. This medication must be used as prescribed. Do not stop using this drug suddenly without consulting your doctor. Skin irritation, redness, swelling and pain at the injection site may occur.

***Fluphenazine Decanoate Injection*** is medication injected into a muscle or under the skin. This medication must be used as prescribed, every two to three weeks as needed or tolerated. Do not stop using this drug without consulting your doctor. Some conditions may worsen if the medication is suddenly stopped. It may take up to two weeks for the full benefit of this drug to take effect. Skin irritation, redness, swelling and pain at the injection site may occur.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with these medications may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking these medications, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

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### **Antipsychotics**

Mesoridazine (Serentil)

Thioridazine (Mellaril)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Mesoridazine and Thioridazine are antipsychotic medications. They have been shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). This medicine may also help you to think more clearly, relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as "positive" symptoms. This medication may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as "negative" symptoms.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Mesoridazine and Thioridazine are indicated for patients with schizophrenia, who either cannot tolerate other antipsychotic drugs or fail to respond to them. Your doctor may ask for an ECG (heart monitor test) to ensure proper heart function.

The **most common** side effects of this medication are sedation, muscle stiffness, tremors, slowed muscle movements, muscle spasms, restlessness, dizziness, constipation, dry mouth, blurry vision, weight gain, upset stomach.

**Less common** side effects include stuffy nose, difficulty passing urine, low blood pressure, unusually fast or uneven heartbeat, impotence, breast enlargement, loss of menstrual cycle, sensitivity to the sun, difficulty swallowing, seizures.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually, it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. Often these movements are in your tongue, mouth and face, but they can happen in other parts of your body like your arms or legs, or even rarely in the muscles that help you breathe. You may not notice these movements, although others around you may notice them. You should also understand that these movements may not go away even if the medication is stopped. The risk for this side effect increases the longer you are treated with an antipsychotic medication and the older you are.

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**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

If you are receiving Propranolol (Inderal), Fluvoxamine (Luvox) or Fluoxetine (Prozac), please check with your doctor.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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### Antipsychotics (Newer Agents)

Lurasidone (Latuda)

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#### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Lurasidone is an antipsychotic medication. It has been shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses such as schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). This medicine may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. It may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. This medication may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms.

#### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are constipation, headache, nausea, vomiting, nervousness, rash, sleepiness, weight gain, lightheadedness, sleeplessness, restlessness, the need to keep moving.

**Less common** side effects include convulsions, difficulty breathing, fast heartbeat, high fever, high or low blood pressure, increased sweating, muscle spasm, muscle stiffness, sudden loss of consciousness, unusually pale skin.

**Weight gain** may occur on this medication and can be preventable in many cases if the right support and strategies are in place. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes (see below) or having problems with fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes. Please be sure to discuss these risks with your healthcare provider.

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**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually, it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. These movements may not go away, even if the medication is stopped. The risk for developing tardive dyskinesia is substantially less with this medication as compared to older antipsychotics. If you have more questions about this side effect, speak with your health care provider.

**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

You may get overheated more easily while using this medicine. Be careful if you exercise heavily or are in high heat or humidity. Drink plenty of water every day.

Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take this medication. This medication is not approved for dementia.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Antipsychotics (Newer Agents)**

Clozapine (Clozaril, FazaClo)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Clozapine is an antipsychotic medication. It is sometimes used when standard antipsychotic medications do not work. It has been shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and bipolar disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). This medicine may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. It may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. This medication may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms. This medication is also commonly used when other medicines and/or treatments have been ineffective.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are weight gain, sedation, drooling or increased salivation, increases in blood fats, fast heart beat, dizziness, low blood pressure, nausea, constipation, blurry vision, restlessness, liver test problems, blood sugar problems, increased risk of seizures.

*Less common* side effects include dry mouth, nighttime loss of bladder control, problems with swallowing or choking, changes in heart rhythm, muscle twitching, fever, heart membrane inflammation, blood clots, particularly in the legs.

*Low white blood cell count* means a drop in the number of infection-fighting cells in your blood. It happens to about one in 100 people (1%) treated with Clozapine, and most often in the first six months of treatment. This can be very serious, and possibly fatal, especially if it is not found quickly. In most cases, once this side effect is found and Clozapine is stopped, the white blood cells return to normal levels. In order to check for this problem, you will be required to have a blood test every week for at least the first six months of treatment and at least every two weeks for as long as you are on Clozapine. You should also know that a sore throat, fever, or flu symptoms could be a signal of this problem, and you need to tell your doctor. If this problem happens, you would not be able to take Clozapine again.

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**Weight gain** may occur on this medication but can often be prevented if the right support and strategies are in place. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes (see below) or having problems with fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes. Please be sure to discuss these risks with your healthcare provider.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually, it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. These movements may not go away even if the medication is stopped. The risk for developing tardive dyskinesia is substantially less with this medication as compared to older antipsychotics. If you have more questions about this side effect, speak with your healthcare provider.

**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take this medication. This medication is not approved for dementia.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

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If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

If you develop flu-like symptoms, tightness in the chest, and/or difficulty breathing, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

If you develop leg pain, it may be a problem with blood clotting, which is potentially serious. Contact your healthcare provider immediately.

**Tell your clinician if you are taking benzodiazepines or any other psychotropic medication as serious respiratory and/or cardiac problems can occur.**

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.



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### Antipsychotics (Newer Agents)

#### Olanzapine (Zyprexa)

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#### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Olanzapine is an antipsychotic and a mood stabilizing medication. It has been shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and bipolar disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). This medicine may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. It may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. This medication may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms.

The injectable form of this drug is injected into the muscle only. It is used to treat severe agitation. It is recommended that dosing should be every 2-4 hours and not go beyond 30 mg in 24 hours. This drug is short-acting (effects do not last for a very long time) and is meant for short-term control of agitation. Oral Olanzapine is preferred for maintenance treatment.

#### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are weight gain, sedation, agitation, dizziness, constipation, dry mouth, restlessness, liver test problems, and blood sugar problems. Injection site redness, swelling and pain may be experienced with the injectable form of Olanzapine. Low blood pressure may be a problem in some patients receiving the injectable form of Olanzapine.

*Less common* side effects include seizures, difficulty swallowing, muscle stiffness, tremors, slowed muscle movements, muscle spasms, changes in body temperature (too hot or too cold), worsening of glaucoma (if this were to happen you would get severe eye pain, and you would need medical help).

**Weight gain** may occur on this medication but can often be prevented if the right support and strategies are in place. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes (see below) or having problems with fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to

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prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually, it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. These movements may not go away, even if the medication is stopped. The risk for developing tardive dyskinesia is less with this medication as compared to older antipsychotics.

**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Avoid alcohol and other street drugs as these may make this and other side effects worse.

Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take this medication. This medication is not approved for dementia.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems. Or, if you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you take other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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### Antipsychotics (Newer Agents)

#### Asenapine (Saphris)

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#### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Asenapine is an antipsychotic medication. It has been helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and bipolar disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). This medicine may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. It may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid, and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. This medication may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms.

Asenapine tablets are to be placed under the tongue and allowed to dissolve; do not swallow, crush or chew the tablet; do not drink or eat anything until it is completely dissolved.

#### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are decreased feeling around the mouth, dizziness, low blood pressure when you stand up quickly, dry mouth, stomach upset, sleepiness, headache, constipation, weight gain, liver test problems (these usually return to normal on their own), increased blood fat levels.

*Less common* side effects include muscle stiffness, tremors, slowed muscle movements, muscle spasms, restlessness, seizures, decreased thyroid levels, fast heart beat.

**Weight gain** may occur on this medication and can be preventable in many cases if the right support and strategies are in place. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes (see below) or having problems with fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and

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medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually, it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. These movements may not go away, even if the medication is stopped. The risk for developing tardive dyskinesia is substantially less with this medication as compared to older antipsychotics. Your doctor can answer questions about this side effect.

**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Avoid alcohol and other street drugs as these may make this and other side effects worse.

Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take this medication. This medication is not approved for dementia.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems. Or, if you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you take other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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### **Antipsychotics (Newer Agents)**

Paliperidone (Invega)  
Paliperidone Injection (Invega Sustenna)  
Risperidone (Risperdal)  
Risperidone Injection (Risperdal Consta)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are called antipsychotic medications. They have shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder and bipolar disorder. These include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). These medicines may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. They may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. These medications may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms.

Risperidone Injection is given by intramuscular injection into the buttock by a healthcare professional once every two weeks. Injections should alternate between the two buttocks. Injected Risperidone may take up to three weeks to begin working. During this time, you should still take the oral forms of this drug or another medication by mouth.

Paliperidone Injection is given by intramuscular injection in the arm or buttocks by a healthcare professional every month. Injections should alternate between the two arms or the two buttocks. Because the injected drug takes time to begin working, oral forms are used initially.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are weight gain, problems sleeping, sedation, agitation, nervousness, anxiety, muscle stiffness, tremors, slowed or involuntary muscle movements, muscle spasms, restlessness, dizziness (especially when standing).

**Less common** side effects include stuffy nose, headache, constipation, dry mouth, low blood pressure (especially when standing), impotence, decreased sexual arousal or ability to have an orgasm or ejaculation, breast enlargement, loss of menstrual cycle, seizures.

**Paliperidone (Invega) can cause a change in heart rhythm that is potentially serious.**

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**Weight gain** may occur on these medications and can be preventable with the right support and strategies. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes or having fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take these medications. Extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes. Discuss these risks with your doctor.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually it doesn't appear until after six months or more. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. These movements may not go away, even if the medication is stopped. The risk for developing tardive dyskinesia is substantially less with these medications as compared to older antipsychotics. If you have more questions about this side effect, speak with your healthcare provider.

**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this. If you develop these symptoms, contact your doctor immediately.

**Risperidone or Paliperidone Injection** may cause redness, swelling, and pain at the injection site.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

This medication may cause increased sensitivity to heat. Avoid activity in hot weather and drink fluids.

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Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take it. This medication is not approved for dementia.

Side effects like sedation and dizziness could make it dangerous to drive a car or operate machinery. Using street drugs or alcohol may make this worse, and are best avoided.

Tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Antipsychotics (Newer Agents)**

lloperidone (Fanapt)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

lloperidone is an antipsychotic medication. It has been shown to be helpful in relieving some of the problems that occur in serious mental illnesses, such as schizophrenia and schizoaffective disorder. These problems may include hallucinations (seeing, feeling, or hearing things when no one is there) or delusions (a fixed belief of something that may not be true). This medicine may also help you to think more clearly so that the things you say are easier for others to understand. It may also help relieve you of feeling suspicious or paranoid, and having beliefs that others find very unlikely or impossible to understand. Racing thoughts, manic behavior, problems with concentration, and excessive anger may also be relieved. These symptoms are referred to as “positive” symptoms. This medication may also help with another group of problems that include a lack of motivation to do things that you enjoy, trouble being together with other people, and a lack of interest to participate in programs, school, or work opportunities. These symptoms are referred to as “negative” symptoms.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are drowsiness, fast, slow, irregular or pounding heartbeat, lightheadedness, muscle stiffness, confusion, diarrhea, restlessness.

**Less common** side effects include weight gain, seizures, difficulty swallowing, changes in body temperature (too hot or too cold), skin rash.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes. Please be sure to discuss these risks with your healthcare provider.

**History of stroke or heart problems** or low mineral/electrolyte levels in your blood, such as magnesium or potassium, can result in heart rate changes; therefore, your physician may order a simple blood test to monitor these. Your physician may also order an ECG (heart monitor test) to make sure it is normal before you start the medication and periodically thereafter.

**Tardive dyskinesia** is a side effect that can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. Often, these movements occur around the tongue, mouth and face, but they can happen in other parts



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of your body as well. You may not notice these movements, although others around you may notice them. These movements might not go away even if the medication is stopped. The risk for this side effect increases the longer you are treated with an antipsychotic and the older you are. The number of people that will get this side effect from Ziprasidone is relatively low compared to older antipsychotics.

**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, high fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take this medication. This medication is not approved for dementia.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication. **In particular, tell your provider if you are taking any of the following medications:**

Furosemide (Lasix)                      Ketoconazole (Nizoral)  
Spironolactone (Aldactone)      Propranolol (Inderal)  
Hydrochlorothiazide

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### **Antidepressants (Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors - MAOIs)**

Phenelzine (Nardil)

Tranlycypromine (Parnate)

Selegiline (Ensam transdermal patch)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are in a group of medications called antidepressants. They are most often used to relieve symptoms of depression, such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. These medications may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. These medications may also be used to reduce anxiety, panic attacks, or unreasonable fears (phobias). You should understand that all antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually several weeks or more.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are sedation, drowsiness, dizziness or lightheadedness (especially when getting up suddenly from a lying or sitting position), low blood pressure, constipation, dry mouth, blurry vision, weight gain, upset stomach, difficulty passing urine, unusually fast or uneven heartbeat, changes in sexual drive and function, such as inability to reach orgasm.

**Less common** side effects include confusion, seizures, sweating, liver problems, high blood pressure reactions (explained below), chest pain, headache, rash, worsening of glaucoma (if this were to happen you would get severe eye pain, and you would need medical help).

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs with these medications must be completely avoided.

The use of alcohol in certain forms while on these medications can cause a serious reaction that causes dangerously high blood pressure. This is also true for certain foods

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and medications, especially antidepressants, such as Fluoxetine (Prozac). Your doctor can provide you with a list of foods and medications to avoid in order to prevent this reaction.

You will have to check with your doctor before taking any other medicines, whether they are prescribed or can be bought without a prescription. You must also continue to avoid the problem foods and medicines for two weeks after you stop these medications in order to avoid this reaction. Seek emergency medical assistance immediately if these signs occur: severe headache, neck stiffness, flushed skin, vomiting, confusion, and fainting.

If you decide to stop taking these medications, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

Use the Emsam patch exactly as prescribed by your healthcare professional.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people that have a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### **SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS**

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

### **FOODS TO AVOID WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION**

Pickled or smoked food, including fish, salami, pepperoni; aged cheeses (not cottage or cream cheese); yogurt; beer and wine; fava beans; excessive chocolate or caffeine.

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**Antidepressants (Selective Serotonin Re-Uptake Inhibitors - SSRIs)**

Citalopram (Celexa)	Fluvoxamine (Luvox)
Escitalopram (Lexapro)	Paroxetine (Paxil)
Fluoxetine (Prozac)	Sertraline (Zoloft)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are in a group of medications called antidepressants. They are most often used to relieve symptoms of depression, such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. These medications may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. These medications may also be used to treat some forms of anxiety, such as obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic attacks, social anxiety, or unreasonable fears (phobias). You should understand that all antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually several weeks or more.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are trouble sleeping, anxiety, nervousness or restlessness, nausea, decreased appetite or weight loss, potential weight gain, decreased sexual arousal or ability to have an orgasm or ejaculation, headache, diarrhea, drowsiness, unusual dreams.

*Less common* side effects include tiredness, dizziness, constipation, decreased concentration, fast or uneven heartbeat, dry mouth, stuffy nose, vomiting, tremors, twitching muscles, sweating, seizures.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation, could make it dangerous to drive a car or operate machinery. Using street drugs or alcohol with these medications may make this side effect and others worse, and are best avoided.

If you should choose to stop these medications, it is best to talk to your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

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If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your physician, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people that have a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

***SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS***

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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**Antidepressants (TriCyclic Antidepressants - TCAs)**

Amitriptyline (Elavil)	Imipramine (Tofranil)
Amoxapine (Ascendin)	Nortriptyline (Pamelor)
Clomipramine (Anafranil)	Protriptyline (Vivactil)
Desipramine (Norpramin)	Trimipramine (Surmontil)
Doxepin (Sinequan)	

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are called antidepressants. They are most often used to relieve signs of depression, such as feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. They may also help prevent depression from returning once it is gone. They are also used to reduce anxiety, panic attacks, fears (phobias) or obsessions. All antidepressant medications usually take several weeks or more to work.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are drowsiness, dizziness or lightheadedness (especially when getting up suddenly from a lying or sitting position), low blood pressure, constipation, dry mouth, blurry vision, weight gain, upset stomach.

*Less common* side effects include confusion, difficulty passing urine, unusually fast or uneven heartbeat, decrease in sexual drive or function.

*Rare* side effects are liver problems, worsening of glaucoma (if this happens you would get severe eye pain, and need medical help).

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with these medications may make this and other side effects worse, and are best avoided.

Talk with your doctor if you want to stop taking these medications. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

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If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people that have a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### ***SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS***

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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**Antidepressants**

Bupropion (Wellbutrin, Zyban)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is one of a number of medications called antidepressants. It is most often used to relieve symptoms of depression, such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. This medication may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. You should understand that all antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually four to six weeks or more.

This medication is also used sometimes to help people stop smoking. Please inform your health care team if you are receiving Zyban, which is the same active ingredient as Wellbutrin.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are dry mouth, problems with sleep, restlessness, anxiety, weight loss, decreased appetite, nausea, dizziness.

**Less common** side effects include muscle spasms, agitation, upset stomach, rash, hallucinations.

**Seizures** The chance of having a seizure is quite low, but still somewhat higher with this medication than with other antidepressants. The chances increase as the dosage goes up, but it is considered safe up to a total daily dose of 450 mg for the regular tablet form of Wellbutrin, and 400 mg for Wellbutrin SR. If you are taking the regular tablet form of Wellbutrin, each separate time you take this medication the amount should be as directed, but not more than 150 mg. It is important to take each dose at least six hours apart, and not to take two doses together to avoid the potential risk of a seizure. If you are taking the sustained release form (Wellbutrin SR), each separate time you take this medication the amount should be as directed, but not more than 200 mg. You should take each dose as close to 12 hours apart as possible. If you have an active seizure disorder or an eating disorder, your risk of seizures may be even greater, and this medication may not be a good choice for you. Please inform your healthcare team if this applies to you.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.



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### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people that have a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### **SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS**

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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**Antidepressants**

Mirtazapine (Remeron)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is one of a number of medications called antidepressants. It is most often used to relieve symptoms of depression, such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. This medication may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. You should understand that all antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually several weeks or more.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are sedation, drowsiness, increased appetite and weight gain, dizziness or lightheadedness (especially when getting up suddenly from a lying or sitting position), dry mouth, blurry vision, upset stomach.

*Less common* side effects include confusion, fast or uneven heartbeat, changes in sexual drive or function, liver test problems, headache, low blood pressure.

*Rare* side effects are low white blood cell count, seizures.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you should choose to stop this medication, it is best to talk to your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

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Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people that have a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### ***SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS***

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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**Antidepressants**

Nefazodone (Serzone)

---

**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is one of a number of medications called antidepressants. It is most often used to relieve symptoms of depression such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. This medication may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. You should understand that all antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually several weeks or more.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are drowsiness, nausea, constipation, dry mouth.

*Less common* side effects include confusion, agitation, blurry vision, unusual dreams, weight loss, decreased concentration, fast, slow or uneven heartbeat, vomiting, tremors, dizziness or lightheadedness (especially when getting up suddenly from a lying or sitting position), low blood pressure, sweating, headache, diarrhea, trouble sleeping, nervousness.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of these signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**Though rare, cases of life-threatening liver failure have been reported in people treated with Nefazodone (Serzone). Inform your doctor immediately if you develop weakness, dark colored urine, or jaundice (yellow-looking skin).**

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

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If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people that have a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### ***SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS***

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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### Antidepressants

Trazodone (Desyrel)

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#### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is one of a number of medications called antidepressants. It is most often used to relieve symptoms of depression, such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. This medication may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. This medication is also commonly used to help people sleep. All antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually several weeks or more.

#### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effect of this medication is drowsiness.

*Less common* side effects include tiredness, weakness, confusion, agitation, constipation, dry mouth, blurry vision, unusual dreams, weight loss, decreased concentration, fast, slow or uneven heartbeat, stuffy nose, nausea, vomiting, tremors, sweating, headache, diarrhea, trouble sleeping, nervousness, dizziness or lightheadedness (especially when getting up suddenly from a lying or sitting position), low blood pressure.

*Priapism*, a prolonged, painful erection of the penis, is a rare side effect of Trazodone. It can be serious and requires immediate medical attention.

*Allergic reaction* Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

#### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

#### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

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If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people with a bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### ***SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS***

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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### **Antidepressants**

Venlafaxine (Effexor)  
Duloxetine (Cymbalta)  
Desvenlafaxine (Pristiq)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is one of a number of medications called antidepressants. It is most often used to relieve symptoms of depression, such as seeing only the worst side of things, feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, worthlessness, sadness, fatigue or loss of your normal energy, loss of interest, changes in sleep, changes in appetite or eating habits, difficulty making decisions, decreased alertness or ability to concentrate, irritability, excessive worry or guilt, and thoughts of harming oneself. This medication may also help prevent the symptoms of depression from returning once they are gone. These medications may also be used to treat some forms of anxiety, such as generalized anxiety, panic attacks, or social anxiety. All antidepressant medications take some amount of time to work, usually several weeks or more.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are trouble sleeping, headache, anxiety, nervousness or restlessness, increase in blood pressure, nausea, diarrhea, drowsiness, decreased appetite or weight loss, decreased sexual drive or ability, sweating.

**Less common** side effective side effects include tiredness, dizziness, unusual dreams, constipation, decreased concentration, fast or uneven heartbeat, dry mouth, blurry vision, vomiting, tremors, seizures.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation, could make it dangerous to drive a car or operate machinery. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.



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Please inform your physician if you are being treated for high blood pressure (hypertension).

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

When used to treat depression in people with bipolar illness (manic depressive illness), all antidepressant medications have a risk of causing a manic episode.

### ***SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS***

Persons taking antidepressants may experience a worsening of their depression and even have thoughts of self-harm. It is important to be aware of your mood. People close to you can help by paying attention to your mood and actions. Contact your provider immediately if this side effect occurs.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Carbamazepine (Carbatrol, Tegretol)  
Equetro (extended release Carbamazepine)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used for a number of different purposes. It is commonly used to control certain types of seizures and has also been used extensively for bipolar disorder. It may be used to stabilize mood swings (changes in mood in any direction between depressed, normal, or manic) in people that have a bipolar illness or schizoaffective disorder. It is sometimes used to treat impulsive behavior, and other mental illnesses.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are dizziness, drowsiness, unsteadiness, clumsiness, nausea, stomach upset, diarrhea, liver test problems.

**Less common** side effects include confusion, skin rash, blurred or double vision, rapid back and forth eye movements, unusual bleeding or bruising, headache, uneven heartbeat, low sodium.

**Rare** side effects are liver problems, fever.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**Tell your doctor** if you develop a fever, sore throat, mouth sores, or notice that you bruise easily, have tiny purple skin spots, bloody nose, or dark urine. These might be signs of a blood problem, and further tests may be needed. To make sure the level of this drug in your body is correct, and to reduce the chances of serious side effects, occasional blood tests will be done while you are taking this medication.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like drowsiness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol may make this side effect and possibly others worse and are best avoided.

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If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

This medication can cause a rash in some people. Most of the rashes do not cause any apparent harm, but a reaction can be serious.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Gabapentin (Neurontin)

---

**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is commonly used to control certain types of seizures (convulsions) or to relieve certain types of nerve pain. It may also be used to treat bipolar disorder (mood swings) or other psychiatric conditions (not approved by the FDA). Your doctor can explain these other purposes as they apply to you.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are sleepiness, dizziness, coordination problems, tiredness, jerking movements of the eyes, tremors.

**Less common** side effects include double or blurred vision, nervousness, problems speaking clearly, memory problems, weight gain, stomach upset, back pain, swelling of feet or hands, muscle twitching, decreased white blood cell count.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems. If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Do not take antacids (Tums, Mylanta) within one to two hours of taking this medication.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

**ELDERLY PATIENTS AND THOSE WITH KIDNEY PROBLEMS**

Gabapentin is removed from your body by the kidneys. As people age, their kidneys work more slowly. For this reason, the dose of Gabapentin is adjusted based on how well your kidneys are functioning. A blood test may be needed to test your kidney function.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Lamotrigine (Lamictal)

---

**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is commonly used to control certain types of seizures (convulsions). It has also been used to treat other conditions, such as bipolar disorder (mood swings) or schizoaffective disorder. Your doctor can explain these other purposes as they apply to you.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are dizziness, blurred or double vision, headache, nausea, vomiting, sedation, rash. Lamotrigine caused a rash in about one in every 10 people treated during studies of the medication. Most of the rashes did not cause any apparent harm, but the reaction can be serious.

*Less common* side effects include diarrhea, stomach upset, muscle or joint pain, trouble sleeping, tremors, nasal stuffiness, increased chance of vaginal infections (females).

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

**ELDERLY PATIENTS**

Very few patients over 65 years old were treated with this medication in formal studies. Because of this, the safety and effectiveness of Lamotrigine in this age group is uncertain.

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**POTENTIAL DRUG INTERACTIONS**

This medication interacts with some other medications, especially some of those used to treat bipolar disorder or seizures, like Depakote or Tegretol. Be sure your doctor is aware of all of the medicines you are taking.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Lithium Carbonate (Eskalith, Lithobid, Lithonate, Lithotabs)  
Lithium Citrate Syrup

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Lithium is used for a number of different purposes. It may be used to treat bipolar disorder (mood swings) or schizoaffective disorder. It has also been used to treat depression, impulsive behavior, or to improve treatment of schizophrenia. Your doctor can explain these other purposes as they apply to you.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are increased thirst, increased urination, nausea, weight gain, hand tremors, tiredness, metallic taste, thyroid problems.

**Less common** side effects include drowsiness, memory, attention, concentration problems, muscle weakness, acne.

Side effects that require **immediate medical attention** are vomiting, diarrhea, tiredness, severe trembling in arms or legs, difficulty speaking, slurred speech, seizures. Lithium toxicity can occur. In order to make sure the level of this medication in your body is correct, and to reduce the chances of serious side effects of long-term use, such as thyroid and kidney function, occasional blood tests will be done while taking this medication.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like drowsiness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol may make this and possibly other side effects worse and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

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**Warning:** Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen (not Tylenol or acetaminophen) may raise your Lithium level. Discuss this with your healthcare team if long-term use is needed.



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### Mood Stabilization Medications

Olanzapine/Fluoxetine (Symbyax)

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#### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is a combination of two drugs, Olanzapine (an antipsychotic drug) and Fluoxetine (antidepressant). It is used to treat a certain type of mental/emotional disorder (depression associated with bipolar disorder). It works by helping to restore the balance of certain natural chemicals in the brain.

#### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are weight gain, sedation, agitation, dizziness, constipation or diarrhea, dry mouth, restlessness, trouble sleeping, unusual dreams, decreased sexual arousal, liver test problems, and blood sugar problems.

**Less common** side effects include seizures, difficulty swallowing, muscle stiffness, tremors, slowed muscle movements, muscle spasms, changes in body temperature (too hot or too cold), worsening of glaucoma (if this were to happen, you would get severe eye pain and you would need medical help).

**Males** In the very unlikely event you have a painful, prolonged erection, stop using this drug and seek immediate medical attention; otherwise, permanent problems could occur.

**Weight gain** may occur on this medication and can be preventable in many cases if the right support and strategies are in place. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes (see below) or having problems with fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes. Please be sure to discuss these risks with your healthcare provider.

**Tardive dyskinesia** can happen to people who take an antipsychotic medication for a long time. Usually it does not appear until after six months or more of treatment. It involves uncontrollable and abnormal muscle movements. These movements may not go away, even if the medication is stopped. The risk for developing tardive dyskinesia is substantially less with this medication as compared to older antipsychotics. Speak with your doctor if you have any questions.

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**Neuroleptic malignant syndrome** is a rare problem that can happen with any antipsychotic medication. People who get this side effect have a change in the way they act, a fever, muscle stiffness, and changes in their blood pressure and heart rate. Although it is rare and most people recover completely, some people have died from this problem. If you develop these symptoms, contact your healthcare provider immediately.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

Elderly patients treated with this medication for dementia have a higher chance of death than patients who do not take this medication. This medication is not approved for dementia.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal)

---

**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to treat certain types of seizures (convulsions). It has also been used to treat other conditions, such as bipolar disorder (mood swings) or facial nerve pain. Your doctor can explain these purposes as they apply to you.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are sleepiness, dizziness, fatigue, nausea, abnormal vision, rash, and acne.

*Less common* side effects include severe skin rashes, low white blood cell and platelet counts.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Topiramate (Topamax)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to treat certain types of seizures (convulsions). It may also be used to treat other conditions, such as bipolar disorder (mood swings). Your doctor can explain these other purposes as they apply to you.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are sleepiness, dizziness, weight loss, coordination problems, jerking movements of the eyes, nervousness, difficulty with concentration, tiredness, memory and possible speech difficulty.

*Less common* side effects include decrease in urination, kidney stones, and secondary angle closure glaucoma. Contact your physician immediately if you experience blurred vision or eye pain. Symptoms typically occur within the first month of treatment.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems. If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

**ELDERLY PATIENTS AND THOSE WITH KIDNEY PROBLEMS**

Topiramate is removed from your body by the kidneys. As people age, their kidneys may work more slowly. For this reason, the dose of Topiramate is adjusted based on how well your kidneys are functioning. A blood test may be needed to test your kidney function. **Special instructions:** Drink several glasses of water each day while receiving this medication to reduce the chance of developing kidney stones from dehydration.

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### **Mood Stabilization Medications**

Valproate/Valproic Acid (Depakene)

Divalproex Sodium (Depakote)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to control certain types of seizures (convulsions). It may also be used to treat bipolar disorder (mood swings), schizoaffective disorder and migraine headaches. It is also used sometimes to treat other conditions such as impulsive behavior, and other mental illnesses. Your doctor can explain these other purposes as they apply to you.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are nausea, gastric distress, mild stomach cramps, change in menstrual periods.

**Less common** side effects include tremors, drowsiness, dizziness, unsteadiness, liver test problems (rarely liver failure), pancreatitis, unusual bleeding or bruising, headache, diarrhea, tiredness, weight gain, hair loss, memory or concentration difficulties.

**Weight gain** may occur on this medication and can be preventable in many cases if the right support and strategies are in place. The cause of weight gain is unknown but may be involved with appetite control, such as not feeling full, leading to more eating. People who gain weight are at risk of developing diabetes (see below) or having problems with fats in their blood that can contribute to heart disease. Talk with your treatment team about how to prevent weight gain.

**Diabetes** (trouble with sugar control) may be more of a risk for people who take this medication. Symptoms of extreme thirst, frequent urination, excess hunger, and weakness should be reported to your doctor. Your ethnic background, family history and medical history may also affect your risk of developing diabetes. Please be sure to discuss these risks with your healthcare provider.

In order to make sure the level of drug in your body is correct, and to reduce the chances of serious side effects, occasional blood tests will be done while you are taking this medication.

You should report immediately to your doctor if you notice that you are bruising easily, have tiny purple skin spots, bloody nose, dark urine, abdominal pain, nausea or anorexia. These may be signs of a problem with your liver or pancreas, and tests may be needed.

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**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is a risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like drowsiness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

Speak with your doctor before stopping this medication because stopping suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Tell your doctor if you take other medications because they may interfere with your prescribed medication.

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**Mood Stabilization Medications**

Verapamil (Calan, Isoptin, Verelan)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used for a number of different purposes. It is commonly used to treat people with high blood pressure, fast heart rates, or angina. It has been determined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be safe and effective for these purposes. It has also been used to treat other conditions not approved by the FDA, such as mania.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are constipation, dizziness, low blood pressure, headache, fatigue, nausea.

**Less common** side effects include unusually slow heart rate, fast or pounding heart beats, rash, worsening of heart function in some people with some types of pre-existing heart problems, increased liver function tests (rarely liver damage).

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

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**Antianxiety/Sleep Medications (Benzodiazepines)**

Alprazolam (Xanax)	Diazepam (Valium)
Chlordiazepoxide (Librium)	Lorazepam (Ativan)
Clonazepam (Klonopin)	
Clorazepate Dipotassium (Tranxene)	

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are called antianxiety medications. They are used to treat the symptoms that are common with anxiety, such as excessive worry, stress, tension, and nervousness. They are also used to relieve sleeping problems and side effects from other medications, such as the antipsychotics. There are other medical uses for this medication, which may include controlling the symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, relief of muscle spasms, or stopping or preventing seizures.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are drowsiness, dizziness, slow reactions.

*Less common* side effects include slurred speech, poor concentration, memory problems, poor coordination, muscle weakness, increased anger or agitation.

This medication can be habit-forming. Do not take a larger dose, or more often or longer time that your provider tells you to. Tolerance may develop with long-term excessive use, making this medication less effective. Do not take this medication for more than four (4) months or stop taking it without talking to your provider. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause withdrawal symptoms, such as anxiety, insomnia and irritability. Your provider will probably decrease your dose gradually.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with these medications may make these side effects worse and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking these medications, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems, as mentioned above.



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Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Antianxiety/Sleep Medications**

Buspirone (Buspar)

---

**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to treat the symptoms that are common with anxiety, such as excessive worry, stress, tension, and nervousness. It is also used sometimes to treat aggression or other psychiatric illnesses that your doctor can explain. This medication takes time to have an effect. You may notice some of the benefits after several weeks, but the full effects may take longer.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are dizziness, drowsiness, nausea, and headache.

*Less common* side effects include difficulty sleeping, stomach pain, diarrhea, tiredness, excitement, weakness, numbness, blurred vision, lightheadedness, dry mouth.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect, and possibly others, worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Antianxiety/Sleep Medications**

Ramelteon (Rozerem)

---

**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to treat insomnia where you have trouble falling asleep.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are headache, daytime sleepiness, dizziness, tiredness, nausea, colds.

*Less common* side effects include thoughts of harming yourself, changes in behavior, worse insomnia.

This medication may affect reproduction hormones by increasing prolactin and potentially decreasing testosterone levels. This may cause missed monthly periods, nipple drainage, decreased sex drive, problems getting pregnant.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

This medication is intended to help you fall asleep. It usually works fast, so take it when you go to bed. The effects usually clear by morning, but you may still feel sleepy during the day. It could be dangerous to drive a car or other things that require you to be alert. Avoid alcohol and street drugs because they may make this and other side effects worse.

You should not take this medication if you have liver disease.

You should not take this medication if you have breathing problems when you sleep, such as sleep apnea or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Take this medication with or right after a high fat meal.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems. If you forget to take a dose, do not double it. Wait for the next dose, or contact your doctor, nurse, pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you take other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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### **Antianxiety/Sleep Medications**

Eszopiclone (Lunesta)

Zaleplon (Sonata)

Zolpidem (Ambien)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are used to help people sleep. They are most commonly used as a short-term (up to 10 days) treatment for sleep problems. Occasionally, it may be necessary to use these medications for a longer period of time.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The **most common** side effects of this medication are drowsiness, dizziness, diarrhea, lightheadedness, difficult coordination.

**Less common** side effects include memory problems, confusion, unusual dreams, unusual thoughts or feelings, changes in behavior.

Inform your physician if you have a history of drug abuse or drug addiction.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

These medications are intended to help you fall asleep. Zolpidem usually starts to work fast, so you should take it only when you are ready to go to bed. The effects usually clear by the next morning, but some people may still feel sleepy during the day. This could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with these medications may make this effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking these medications, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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### **Stimulant Medications (Psychostimulants)**

Dextroamphetamine (Adderall, Dexedrine)  
Methylphenidate (Concerta, Metadate, Ritalin)  
Pemoline (Cylert)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THESE MEDICATIONS**

These medications are used to treat several different problems. The most common problem treated with these medications is attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in both young people and adults. Dextroamphetamine and methylphenidate are generally believed to be more effective than Pemoline for this disorder. These medications are sometimes also used to treat depression in medically ill elderly people, or people who also have serious medical conditions (e.g., AIDS). Dextroamphetamine and methylphenidate can be used to treat a sleep disorder called narcolepsy.

### **RISKS OF THESE MEDICATIONS**

The *most common* side effects of this medication is trouble sleeping, loss of appetite, irritability, weight loss, stomachache, headache, nervousness, restlessness, dizziness.

*Less common* side effects include fast or pounding heartbeat, increased blood pressure, changes in mood (sad, depressed), unusual muscle movements called tics, changes in growth rate of some children (see special instructions below).

*Rare* side effects are irregular heartbeat, psychosis.

The risk of liver problems with Pemoline is greater than with the other medications in this group. Blood tests to detect problems with your liver will need to be done routinely while you are on this medication. Your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of this medication.

Inform your physician if you have a history of drug abuse or drug addiction.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Avoid alcohol and other street drugs because they may make this and other side effects worse.

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Individuals with glaucoma should not use Methylphenidate (Ritalin). There have been reports of serious cardiovascular adverse events in patients taking certain ADHD products.

There is a slight increased risk (1 per 1,000) for drug-related psychiatric adverse events, such as hearing voices, becoming suspicious for no reason, or becoming manic, even if you do not have previous psychiatric problems.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. The dosage may need to be decreased for sometime before you stop. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

### **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS**

Try not to take these medications late in the day. This may make falling asleep more difficult. Your doctor may need to make adjustments in the time and dosage of these medications in order for you to receive the best effects and fewest side effects.

You may be allergic to the coloring agent, tartrazine, which is used in some formulations of Dextroamphetamine.

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION**

*Cylert (Pemoline)* has been associated with liver abnormalities ranging from reversible liver function test increases that do not cause any symptoms, to liver failure which may result in death. Therefore, *Cylert (Pemoline)* should not be used until there has been a complete discussion of the risks and benefits of *Cylert* therapy, and written informed consent has been obtained before beginning therapy.

If you have a history of drug abuse or addiction, inform your healthcare provider.

Improper use of these drugs may lead to drug dependence.

*Concerta, Metadate, Ritalin* long-time use can lead to tolerance and dependence and abnormal behaviors.

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### Stimulant Medications

Atomoxetine (Strattera)

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#### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is commonly used to treat attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in both young people and adults. Atomoxetine has been shown to be as effective as the other medications used to treat ADHD, but unlike those other medications, this medication is not a stimulant. This drug is also being studied for use in treating depression.

#### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are stomach pain, headache, vomiting, decreased appetite, cough, nausea, irritability, dizziness, sleepiness.

*Less common* side effects include sexual difficulties, increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, urinary retention, lightheadedness, weight loss, constipation, dry mouth.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

#### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

#### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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There have been reports of serious cardiovascular adverse events in patients taking certain ADHD products.

There is a slight increased risk (1 per 1,000) for drug-related psychiatric adverse events, such as hearing voices, becoming suspicious for no reason, or becoming manic, even if you do not have previous psychiatric problems.



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### Anticholinergics

Benztropine (Cogentin)  
Trihexyphenidyl (Artane)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These are two of several different medications used to help control some of the side effects people get from taking antipsychotic medications. The side effects that may be controlled include restlessness, muscle tremors, muscle stiffness, slow monotone speech, expressionless facial appearance, exaggerated posturing of your head, neck or jaw, difficulty swallowing, and problems with eye movements.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are dry mouth, blurred vision, constipation, difficulty passing urine.

*Less common* side effects include drowsiness, confusion, memory problems, dizziness, unusually fast heartbeat, skin rash.

*Rare* side effects are worsening of glaucoma (if this were to happen, you would get severe eye pain and you would need medical help).

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like drowsiness and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking these medications, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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### **Beta-Blockers**

Atenolol (Tenormin)            Nadolol (Corgard)  
Metoprolol (Lopressor)      Propranolol (Inderal)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These drugs are called beta-blockers. They have many different uses. They are commonly used to treat heart and circulation problems such as high blood pressure and angina (chest pain caused by heart problems), migraine headaches, and abnormal heart beats. They have been determined by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to be safe and effective for these purposes and a number of others. They have also been used to treat conditions not approved by the FDA, such as anxiety, agitation or aggression, and tremors, a side effect of Lithium. This medication is also used to help control side effects people get from antipsychotic medications. The particular side effect that may be controlled is restlessness.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are dizziness, lightheadedness, low blood pressure, tiredness, slow heart rate.

*Less common* side effects include confusion, cold hands or feet, swollen ankles or feet, impotence, depression, problems with sleep, nightmares, nausea, diarrhea, difficulty breathing or a night-time cough, uneven heart beats.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

### **SPECIAL RISKS FOR SOME PEOPLE** (*inform your physician if any apply*)

- People with diabetes may have problems with blood sugar control and recognizing when they have low blood sugar.
- People with asthma may have more trouble with breathing.
- People with angina should not stop this medication suddenly, since this may cause a worsening of the angina.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

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**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like drowsiness and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

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**Hormonal**

Flutamide (Eulexin)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Eulexin is approved by the FDA in the treatment of prostate cancer. This medication slows down the presence and activity of male hormones, called androgens. This medication is also used to control and decrease sexual impulses, sexual fantasies and aggressive behaviors.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are hot flashes, decrease in sexual desire and ability (impotence).

*Less common* side effects include dark urine, yellowing of skin and eyes, stomach pain, sun sensitivity and liver complications.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical help immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**SPECIAL RISKS FOR SOME PEOPLE**

Patients with severe liver problems should not use this medication.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

This medication can cause harm to an unborn child. This medication should only be used by pregnant women when there is a life-threatening situation.

**OTHER RISKS**

This medication may cause an increase in liver enzyme levels, which may be temporary and mild in healthy individuals. Patients also may be at risk of bone density (thickness) problems with long-term use that may not be reversible.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications, over-the-counter or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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**Hormonal**

Leuprolide Injectable (GnRH, Lupron, Lupron Depot)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Lupron is a hormone (GnRH) that is injected into a muscle. The FDA has approved its use for the treatment of prostate and uterine cancer. It is also used to control and decrease sexual impulses and fantasies and aggressive behavior.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are rapid mood changes during early stages of treatment, sweating and hot flashes, lack of periods in women, headaches.

*Less common* side effects include nausea, vomiting, dizziness, difficulty sleeping, swelling of hands/feet, groin pain, difficulty urinating, memory loss, mood or mental changes, enlargement of breast tissue in males.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching, rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**SPECIAL RISKS FOR SOME PEOPLE** (*inform your physician if any apply*)

- Women with a history of any abnormal vaginal bleeding.
- People who are hypersensitive to GnRH or related drugs.
- People with congestive heart failure or other conditions requiring sodium restriction.
- People who have had heart problems.
- People with a history of cancer.
- People with a history of osteoporosis (bone thickness problems).

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

This medication should not be used by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

**OTHER RISKS**

This medication could cause swelling of the breasts, injection site irritation/inflammation. Long-term use may result in loss of bone density, which may not be reversible.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems. If you forget to take a dose of your medication, contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

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**Hormonal**

Medroxyprogesterone (Provera)

Medroxyprogesterone Injectable (Depo-Provera)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Depo-Provera is a hormone (progestin) that is injected directly into the muscle. Provera is taken by mouth. This medication is approved by the FDA for pregnancy prevention, to treat women with no periods, and to treat certain types of cancer. This medication is also used to control and decrease sexual impulses, sexual fantasies and aggressive behaviors.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are as follows: males taking this medication may experience feeling tired, weight gain, cold, hot flashes, headache, inability to sleep, nausea, and superficial vein inflammation; women taking this medication may experience menstrual irregularities, spotting, breakthrough bleeding, weight gain, nausea, vomiting, headaches, and breast tenderness.

*Less common* side effects include anemia, swelling, appetite changes, chest pain, convulsions, yellowing of skin and eyes, and deep vein clotting.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching, rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**SPECIAL RISKS FOR SOME PEOPLE** (*inform your physician if any apply*)

- This medication should not be taken if you have breast cancer, liver disease, pregnancy, vaginal bleeding, inflammation of veins.
- Local irritation or inflammation may occur at the site of injection.
- Inform your provider if you have depression, fluid retention, or diabetes.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

This medication should not be used by women who are pregnant or breastfeeding.

**OTHER RISKS**

The FDA has reported that long-term use of this medication may lead to a decrease in bone density (thickness). Duration of the therapy should be limited because it may decrease bone minerals, which is not completely reversible. This may lead to bone conditions such as osteoporosis.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications, over-the-counter or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with this medication.

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**Other**

Acamprosate (Campral)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to help people with alcohol dependence to remain alcohol free or abstinent. It is believed to work by making chemical changes in the brains of individuals who had been drinking large amounts of alcohol over a period of time. Acamprosate brings the chemical changes closer to normal, and this is believed to somehow reduce the pleasurable effects of drinking alcohol. It is considered a treatment option for individuals who are in recovery from alcohol dependency and who are in counseling or in a treatment program and is one of a few medications that can help them to maintain abstinence and prevent relapse. The medication does not prevent the withdrawal symptoms of alcohol withdrawal, nor does it help individuals who overuse other substances, such as street drugs.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are diarrhea, gas, upset stomach, loss of appetite, dry mouth, dizziness, itching, weakness, insomnia, anxiety, depression; nausea, vomiting, and irritability.

*Less common* side effects include burning, tingling, numbness in the hands, feet, arms, or legs.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching, rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

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*Other*

Amantadine (Symmetrel)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used for a variety of purposes, including helping to control some of the side effects people get from taking antipsychotic medications. The side effects that may be controlled include muscle tremors, muscle stiffness, slow monotone speech, expressionless facial appearance, exaggerated posturing of your head, neck or jaw, difficulty swallowing, problems with eye movements, and restlessness.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are dizziness, headache, lightheadedness, nausea, difficulty sleeping, nervousness, anxiety, difficulty concentrating.

*Less common* side effects include low blood pressure (when getting up suddenly from a lying or sitting position, especially early in treatment), reddish purple colored skin, especially on your legs, swollen ankles, decreased appetite (potential weight loss), constipation, dry mouth.

*Rare* side effects are psychosis, weakness, slurred speech.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.



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**Other**

Clonidine (Catapres)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used for a number of different purposes. It is commonly used to control high blood pressure and has been determined by the FDA to be safe and effective for this purpose. It has also been used to treat other conditions not approved by the FDA, such as withdrawal from opiates and other substances, treatment of a condition called Tourette's syndrome, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), migraine headaches, and several other psychiatric conditions. This medication is available in tablet form and a skin patch.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are dry mouth, drowsiness, sedation, constipation, dizziness. With the patch, local irritation of your skin can occur.

*Less common* side effects include low blood pressure (especially when standing up quickly), headache, fatigue, weakness, nervousness, agitation, depression, rash, nausea, decreased sexual drive or ability.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, it is very important to speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication suddenly may cause problems and potential abrupt rise in blood pressure (rebound hypertension).

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

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**Other**

Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)

Hydroxyzine (Vistaril)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

These medications are in a group of medications called antihistamines. They are used for a number of different purposes. They are two of several different medications used to help control some of the side effects people get from taking antipsychotic medications. The side effects that may be controlled include restlessness, muscle tremors, muscle stiffness, slow monotone speech, expressionless facial appearance, exaggerated posturing of your head, neck or jaw, difficulty swallowing, and problems with eye movements.

Another common use is to treat allergic conditions such as hay fever, or allergic reactions such as hives. They have also been used as a short-term treatment for sleeping problems, motion sickness, and for relief of cough and common cold symptoms.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are sedation, sleepiness, dizziness, dry mouth, blurred vision, constipation, upset stomach.

*Less common* side effects include difficulty passing urine, confusion, memory problems, unusually fast heartbeat, skin rash.

*Rare* side effects are worsening of glaucoma (if this were to happen, you would get severe eye pain and you would need medical help).

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs or alcohol will make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you stop taking these medications, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

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Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

### **ELDERLY PATIENTS**

These medications may cause increased problems with sleep and other stimulant effects opposite to those in younger adults. Elderly men have more frequent problems with difficulty passing urine than younger men.

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### Other

Disulfiram (Antabuse)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to help people who have had problems with alcohol abuse or dependence. It helps people to avoid using alcohol by causing a very unpleasant reaction if they drink even a small amount of alcohol. Treatment with this medication is probably most effective when it is a part of an overall plan that includes some form of counseling to treat alcohol abuse.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Following are some of the possible side effects that may happen while taking this medication. The side effects marked with an asterisk (\*) usually fade away after a couple of weeks of treatment.

The **most common** side effects are drowsiness\*, tiredness\*, rash.

**Less common** side effects include headache\*, impotence, acne, metallic or garlic-like after-taste\*, loss of sensation and/or muscle weakness in your legs or arms, which usually improves after stopping the medication.

**Rare** side effects are possible worsening of psychosis, psychotic reactions, liver problems, vision problems, called optic neuritis, that usually improve after stopping the medication.

### **RISK OF DRINKING ALCOHOL WHILE TAKING THIS MEDICATION**

The reactions listed here are likely to happen if you drink alcohol while taking this medication. The symptoms, which may be more or less intense, include: flushing, throbbing in the head and neck, throbbing headache, shortness of breath, rapid breathing, nausea, vomiting, sweating, thirst, chest pain, pounding heartbeat, rapid heartbeat, low blood pressure, causing dizziness or fainting, anxiety, weakness, blurred vision, and confusion. Most often, these reactions last from 30 minutes to a few hours, followed by sleep and full recovery. However, there is a chance that a reaction may lead to even more serious problems, such as extremely low breathing rates, ineffective blood circulation complicated by irregular heartbeats, heart attack or heart failure, unconsciousness, seizures, and even death. **It is extremely important not to drink alcohol.**

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

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### **OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. Using street drugs with this medication may make this side effect and possibly others worse, and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping the medication will not immediately stop the bad reactions described above. You will continue to be at risk of having these reactions for about two weeks after you stop the medication.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your prescribed medication.

You should not start this medication until you have been sober for at least 12 hours.

### **POTENTIAL DRUG INTERACTIONS**

You must **avoid all sources of alcohol** while taking this medication. This includes the alcohol that may be in some medications, such as cough and cold remedies, that you can buy at a pharmacy or food store without a prescription. Be sure to check the ingredients in any product you use. Some people may even react to products that are used on your skin, such as aftershave lotion, but this is unlikely.

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**Other**

Naltrexone (ReVia, Trexan)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to help people with alcohol dependence or addiction to narcotic drugs. It helps people avoid using those substances in the future. Treatment with this medication is most effective when it is part of an overall plan that includes some form of counseling to treat alcohol or narcotic use.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are nausea, vomiting, dizziness, problems with sleep, anxiety, nervousness, stomach pain/cramps, low energy, joint and muscle pain, headache, loss of appetite, weight loss.

*Less common* side effects include liver problems (this may include stomach pain lasting several days, white bowel movements, dark urine, yellowing of your eyes or skin).

This medication is not like Disulfiram (Antabuse). It does not cause a violent reaction when taken with alcohol.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy are not completely known. There is potential risk it could be harmful to a fetus. Breastfeeding should be avoided because the medicine will be in your milk.

**OTHER RISKS**

Some side effects, like sedation and dizziness, could make it dangerous to drive a car or do other things that require you to be alert. This medication does not reverse the harmful effects of alcohol on your ability to perform these activities. Using this medication with narcotics may result in severe problems with breathing before the narcotic causes the desired effect. It is advisable for you to carry identification that tells emergency medical people you are taking this medication.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Be sure to tell your provider if you are taking other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.

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### **OTHER WAYS TO TREAT YOUR ILLNESS**

Other medications and non-drug methods may be available to treat your illness. Your doctor can give you more information about their benefits and risks. Your participation in a comprehensive treatment plan is important to successfully stay drug or alcohol free.

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### Other

Thyroid Hormones (Levoxyl, Synthroid)

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### **PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to treat people who have a deficiency in their thyroid hormones (hypothyroidism). The FDA has approved use of this medication for this condition. Some doctors use this medication to treat other conditions not approved by the FDA, including depression and bipolar disorder. This medication is not used for weight loss.

### **RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

Side effects usually only happen at the beginning of treatment or when the dose is too high. Your doctor may need to check the amount of medication you are taking. If this medication causes higher than normal levels of thyroid in your body, there may be a risk of osteoporosis. Women past menopause have a higher risk of this side effect.

The **most common** side effects are nervousness, headache, excessive sweating, trouble tolerating heat, trouble sleeping, decreased appetite, fast/pounding heartbeat. In women, menstrual cycle changes are possible.

**Less common** side effects include skin rash or hives, chest pain, shortness of breath. If you experience any of these side effects, contact your doctor or get emergency care.

### **RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

When taken during pregnancy, no harmful effects are known to occur to the fetus. Breastfeeding should be done with physician supervision because the medicine will be in your milk.

### **OTHER RISKS**

People with diabetes, some kinds of heart trouble, or high blood pressure may have additional risks from these medications. Make sure your doctor knows if you have any of these conditions so that he can explain if any risks apply to you.

Using street drugs may make some of the side effects worse and are best avoided.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first. Stopping suddenly may cause problems, especially in people who have diabetes. If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.

Tell your provider if you take other medications or herbal supplements because they may interfere or interact with your medication.



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**Other**

Varenicline (Chantix)

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**PURPOSE AND BENEFITS OF THIS MEDICATION**

This medication is used to help people stop smoking and remain tobacco free. It is believed to work by making chemical changes in the brain so that smokers do not experience a craving for cigarettes. This medication is usually started one week before a planned smoking quit date. The dose is usually increased slowly during the first week. Most people will need to take the drug for up to 12 weeks, but individuals who have not stopped smoking may need to take it for another 12 weeks. The drug is taken after eating, with a full eight ounce glass of water.

**RISKS OF THIS MEDICATION**

The *most common* side effects of this medication are nausea, vomiting, headache, constipation, gas, changes in sleep and dreaming.

*Less common* side effects include change of appetite, nightmares and fatigue.

**Allergic reaction** Seek medical attention immediately if any of the following signs or symptoms appear: itching or rash, swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**RISKS IN PREGNANCY**

The effects of this medication during pregnancy or breastfeeding have not been studied, but use should be avoided. Of course, smoking harms the fetus, so you should talk to your doctor about quitting.

**OTHER RISKS**

This medication may increase the risk of suicide, depression, behavioral disturbances or agitation. You should be aware that these effects may occur during treatment or after you have stopped taking the medication.

The risks of using this drug at the same time as nicotine patches or other nicotine replacement therapy are not known.

If you have kidney problems or are on dialysis, your dose may need to be lowered.

If you decide to stop taking this medication, speak with your doctor first.

If you forget to take a dose of your medication, do not double the dose. Wait until the next dose is due, or contact your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist for instruction.



**Changes to Manual after Publication Date**

<b>MEDICATION (GENERIC NAME)</b>	<b>MEDICATION (BRAND NAME)</b>	<b>DATE CHANGES WERE ADDED TO MANUAL</b>	<b>SEE MANUAL PAGE #</b>	<b>REASON FOR CHANGE/ADDITION</b>

# **Information about Psychiatric Medications**

## **What are psychiatric medications?**

Like most drugs used in medicine, psychiatric medications act by controlling symptoms, not by curing illness. However, many of the drugs work by correcting a chemical imbalance in the brain. In many cases, these medications can help a person go on with their life despite some continuing mental distress and difficulty coping with problems. For example, antipsychotic drugs like Zyprexa and Risperdal can turn off the "voices" heard by some people with schizophrenia and help them to perceive reality more accurately. Antidepressant medications can lift the deep, heavy moods of depression.

## **How do I know what medication and dose are best for me?**

Like any medication, psychiatric medications do not produce the same effect in everyone. Some people may respond better to one medication than another. Some may need larger dosages than others do. Some experience annoying side effects, while others do not. Age, sex, body size, body chemistry, physical illnesses and their treatments, diet, and habits such as smoking, are some of the factors that can influence a medication's effect.

## **How long will I have to take these medications?**

This depends on the disorder. Some individuals with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder may need to take these medications throughout their adult lives. Some may need medications only intermittently. People who are depressed or anxious may need medication for a single period, perhaps several months, and then never have to take it again.

## **What types of psychiatric medications are available?**

Psychiatric medications can be described by their generic (chemical) names and by their trade names (brand names used by drug companies). Psychiatric medications can be divided into four categories based on the symptoms for which they are primarily used: antipsychotic, mood stabilizing, antidepressant, and anti-anxiety.

## **Information about Antipsychotic Medications**

### **What are antipsychotic medications?**

Antipsychotic medications are used to treat a variety of mental illnesses. However, the medications, as their name suggests, primarily act against psychotic symptoms. A person who is psychotic is out of touch with reality and may "hear voices" (auditory hallucinations) or have strange and untrue ideas, which are called delusions (for example, thinking that others can hear you, or are trying to harm you, or that you are the President of the United States). These kinds of behaviors are symptoms of psychotic illness, the principal form of which is schizophrenia. The medications do not usually "cure" the illness, but they can take away many of the symptoms or make them milder or shorten the course of an illness.

### **What kinds of antipsychotic medications are there?**

There are a number of antipsychotic (or neuroleptic) medications that are available. All of these drugs are effective; the main differences are in their potency, that is, the dosage (amount) prescribed to produce therapeutic effects and the side effects. Some people might think that the higher the dose of medication, the more serious the illness, but this is not always true. Some less potent drugs, like chlorpromazine (Thorazine), are prescribed in higher numbers of milligrams than others of high potency, like Risperdal (Risperidone) and haloperidol (Haldol). Many factors are considered when an antipsychotic medication is prescribed. Besides how "ill" someone is, the patient's age, body weight, and type of medication are all important. Past history is important, too. If a person took a particular medication before and it worked, he or she is likely to be prescribed the same one again.

### **How often must these drugs be taken?**

Unlike some prescription drugs which must be taken several times during the day, antipsychotic medications can usually be taken just once a day. Thus, patients can reduce daytime side effects by taking the medications before bed. Some antipsychotic medications are available in forms that can be injected once or twice a month, thus, assuring that the medicine is being taken reliably.

### **How long does it take for the medications to work?**

Just as people vary in their responses to antipsychotic medications, they also vary in their speed of improvement. Some symptoms diminish in days, while others take weeks or months. For many patients, substantial improvement is seen by the sixth week of treatment, although this is not true in every case. If someone does not seem to be improving, a different type of medication may be tried.

## How long will I need to continue taking the medication?

Even if a person is feeling better or completely well, he/she should not just stop taking the medication. They should continue to see a psychiatrist while tapering off medication. Some people may need to take medication for an extended period of time, or even indefinitely. These people usually have chronic (long-term, continuous) form of schizophrenia, or have a history of repeated acute episodes, and are likely to become ill again. Also, a person who has experienced one or two severe episodes may need medication indefinitely. In these cases, medication may be continued in as low a dosage as possible to maintain control of symptoms. This approach, called maintenance treatment, prevents relapse in many people and removes or reduces symptoms for others.

## What are the side effects of antipsychotic medications?

**Common Side Effects:** Antipsychotic medications vary considerably in their side effects, and some people have more trouble with certain side effects than others. Most side effects of antipsychotic medications are mild. Many common ones disappear after the first few weeks of treatment. These include drowsiness, rapid heartbeat, and dizziness when changing position. A side effect may sometimes be desirable. For instance, the sedative effect of some antipsychotic medications is useful for those who have trouble sleeping or who become agitated during the day.

**Weight Gain:** Some people gain weight while taking antipsychotic medications and may have to change their diet to control their weight.

**Other:** Other side effects that may be caused by some antipsychotic medications include decrease in sexual ability or interest, problems with menstrual periods, sunburn, or skin rashes. If a side effect is especially troublesome, it should be discussed with the doctor who may prescribe a different medication, change the dosage level or schedule, or prescribe an additional medication to control the side effect.

**Movement disorders and tardive dyskinesia:** After starting on antipsychotics, especially older antipsychotic drugs, temporary movement disorders and related symptoms in the muscles can occur, as follows:

- You may feel restlessness and have the inability to sit still, accompanied by a feeling of tension and uneasiness. You may feel like rocking from foot to foot, shuffling your legs, crossing or swinging your legs repeatedly, or continuously pacing up and down.
- Muscles become stiff and weak, so that your face may lose its animation, and you find movement difficult.
- You may develop a slow tremor (shaking), especially in your hands.
- Your fingers may move as if you were rolling a pill.
- When walking, you may lean forward, take small steps, and find it difficult to start and stop.

- Your mouth may hang open and produce excessive saliva.
- You may find it difficult to move, and your muscles may feel very weak.

Your doctor is able to prescribe a drug that will eliminate or reduce these side effects, which tend to diminish with time.

More serious is the development of longer-term side effects, particularly a condition called tardive dyskinesia. This condition is characterized by involuntary movements that most often occur around the mouth but are sometimes in other parts of the body, resulting in writhing movements of the limbs, muscle spasms, tremors and tics. The disorder may range from mild to severe, and individuals with it can recover partially or completely, but no effective treatment exists for tardive dyskinesia. The possible risks of long-term treatment with antipsychotic medications must be weighed against the benefits in each individual case by patient, family, and doctor.

**Sexual side effects:** Many antipsychotic drugs can cause sexual side effects for both women and men. You should not feel embarrassed to talk about these with your doctor, although such feelings are natural. Decreased sexual desire can make men and women less easily aroused. The drugs can interfere with erection and affect ejaculation. The drugs can also affect breast development and the production of breast milk, which can affect men as well as women. Loss of periods, vaginal dryness, unwanted hair and acne may occur in women. Osteoporosis (loss of bone density) as a consequence of hormone changes is a serious longer-term risk.

**Neurological Side Effects:** Neuroleptic malignant syndrome (referred to as NMS) is a neurological complication that is thought to occur in less than one in 100 people taking antipsychotic drugs. It can be dangerous if not detected and treated. The symptoms may appear to be like an acute infection, with sweating or fever. However, other typical symptoms include tremor, rigidity or loss of movement, with difficulty speaking and swallowing. Individuals develop lethargy and confusion, which can progress to stupor or coma. Blood tests show abnormal results. This situation requires hospitalization and the immediate stopping of the antipsychotic medication, at which time the condition resolves on its own.

## **What can I do to reduce side effects?**

Dry mouth – drinking sips of water, chewing sugarless gum and daily teeth daily brushing may help.

Constipation – try to eat bran cereals, prunes, fruit, and vegetables to prevent this.

Bladder problems – emptying the bladder completely may be difficult, and the urine stream may not be as strong as usual. Older men with enlarged prostate conditions may be at particular risk for this problem.

Sexual problems – sexual functioning may be impaired.

Dizziness – rising from the bed or chair slowly is helpful.

### **Are there problems taking antipsychotic medications with other drugs?**

Antipsychotic medications can produce unwanted effects when taken with other medications. Therefore, the doctor should be told about all medicine being taken, including over-the-counter preparations, and the extent of the use of alcohol. Some antipsychotic medications interfere with the action of antihypertensive medications (for high blood pressure), anticonvulsants (for epilepsy), and medications used for Parkinson's disease. Some antipsychotic medications add to the effects of alcohol and other central nervous system depressants, such as antihistamines, antidepressants, barbiturates, some sleeping and pain medications, and narcotics.



# **Information about Metabolic Syndrome and Atypical Antipsychotic Medications**

## **What is metabolic syndrome?**

Individuals who are on antipsychotics, especially the atypical antipsychotics, may have an increased chance of developing several related adverse effects that are together called the metabolic syndrome. These atypical antipsychotics include clozapine (Clozaril), risperidone (Risperdal), olanzapine (Zyprexa), quetiapine (Seroquel), aripiprazole (Abilify), and ziprasidone (Geodon). While the full cause is not really known, it is related to changes in the way the body metabolizes the foods that you eat. The body converts some foods to a sugar called glucose, which is sent around the body in the blood so that cells can use it for energy.

People develop diabetes when they have high and dangerous levels of sugar in the blood. While some develop diabetes when they are young, which is an inherited form of the disease, they can also inherit a tendency to the disease that places them at risk for diabetes when placed on certain medications that are associated with weight gain or lead to higher amounts of sugar, fats and cholesterol in their blood.

## **Why is it important that I know about the metabolic syndrome?**

Metabolic syndrome can result in the serious complications of diabetes, so efforts to detect it early and prevent it are critical. Meanwhile, increased fats and cholesterol are associated with heart disease, especially if the person has other risk factors, such as smoking and high blood pressure.

## **What is my risk for developing metabolic syndrome?**

Anyone taking antipsychotic medications or other drugs may be at increased risk. Some weight gain will occur in anyone taking these drugs, but you will need to be especially careful if you also have any of the following signs or conditions associated with the metabolic syndrome:

- Significant weight gain or obesity
- High levels of fats (triglycerides) and bad (LDL) cholesterol
- Low levels of good (HDL) cholesterol in the blood
- High blood glucose (determined by blood tests)
- Insulin resistance (Type II adult-onset diabetes)
- High blood pressure (130/85 or higher)

Individuals with a family history of heart disease or diabetes are especially at risk, as are those who are obese and/or gain a lot of weight. Obesity that is centered in the abdomen ("spare tire") is the most risky. This is defined as men with waists over 40 inches and women with waists over 35 inches. In order to get the best idea of

whether you are obese or just overweight, you can calculate your BMI (Body Mass Index) as follows:

The Body Mass Index (BMI) is a measurement tool that compares your height to your weight and gives you an indication of whether you are overweight, underweight or at a healthy weight for your height.

1. Weigh yourself on a scale and write down the number.
2. Measure your height in inches and write down the number.
3. Take your height and multiply the number of inches by the same number of inches (example: if your height is 60 inches, multiply  $60 \times 60 = 360$ )
4. Divide your weight by the second figure (your height multiplied)
5. Multiply that answer by 703. This is your Body Mass Index (BMI).

A BMI of *less than 18.5* indicates you are thin for your height.

A BMI *between 18.6 and 24.9* indicates you are at a healthy weight.

A BMI *between 25 and 29.9* suggests you are overweight for your height.

A BMI of *30 or greater* indicates obesity.

## **What can be done to prevent metabolic syndrome?**

Your physician will need to monitor your lab tests, especially your blood glucose, triglycerides and cholesterol, on a more regular basis (every few months or more), and you may need to be switched to an antipsychotic medication that has less risk of weight gain and metabolic syndrome.

You can do a lot to prevent metabolic syndrome. Here are some specific tips about how to do this:

- **Lose Weight:** Obesity is a major contributor to many of the components of metabolic syndrome. By losing weight and keeping it off, you can greatly improve your health.
- **Increase Physical Activity:** Physical activity burns excess fat and increases muscle mass, helping your body burn calories much more efficiently. You don't have to join a gym or buy any special equipment to get more active. Go for a walk or take the stairs instead of the elevator. Remember, the activities you enjoy are the ones you will stick with for the long term.
- **Lower Blood Pressure:** Losing weight and increasing physical activity can lower your blood pressure. When more intervention is needed, medication can be prescribed to help lower blood pressure.
- **Lower Cholesterol:** Regular physical activity and a diet low in saturated fats and high in fiber, and medications, can help normalize blood lipid levels.
- **Stop Smoking:** Smoking is known to greatly worsen the health consequences of metabolic syndrome. Many cessation plans are available to smokers, so talk to your health care team about ways to quit and prevent weight gain.

## **Information about Mood Stabilizing Medications**

### **What are mood stabilizing medications?**

Mood stabilizing medications are prescribed to individuals with bipolar disorder, and also to individuals with schizoaffective disorder, which is a form of schizophrenia, previously described. Bipolar disorder, also called manic-depressive illness, is characterized by cycling mood changes: people experience severe highs (mania) and lows (depression). Cycles may be predominantly manic or depressive with normal mood between cycles. Mood swings may follow each other very closely, within hours or days, or may be separated by months to years. These "highs" and "lows" may vary in intensity and severity. Someone may have one episode of bipolar disorder and never have another, or be free of illness for several years. Those with more than one episode will need to take medication to prevent severe changes in mood.

When someone is in a manic "high," they may be overactive, overly talkative, and have a great deal of energy and not feel the need for sleep. Racing thoughts will lead them to switch quickly from one topic to another, and they will have an attention span that is short and easily distracted. Sometimes, the "high" person is irritable or angry and has false or inflated ideas about his position or importance in the world. He may be very elated, full of grand schemes which might range from business deals to romantic sprees. Often, he shows poor judgment in these ventures. Mania may worsen to a psychotic state and loss of touch with reality.

Depression will show in a "low" mood, lack of energy, changes in eating and sleeping patterns, feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, sadness, worthlessness, and guilt, and sometimes thoughts of suicide.

### **What are the different types of mood stabilizing medications?**

Lithium and a group of medications that are also used as anticonvulsants (to treat seizures) are used to stabilize moods. Lithium is most often used to combat mania. It is unusual to find mania without a subsequent or preceding period of depression. Lithium evens out mood swings in both directions, so that it is used not just for acute manic attacks or flare-ups of the illness, but also as an ongoing treatment of bipolar disorder.

Not all individuals with symptoms of mania benefit from Lithium. Some have been found to respond to another type of medication, the anticonvulsant medications that are usually used to treat epilepsy. The anticonvulsant, divalproex sodium (Depakote), and the related drug, valproic acid (Depakene), are the anticonvulsants that have been most widely used. Others are oxcarbazepine (Trileptal), carbamazepine (Tegretol), and lamotrigine (Lamictal).

The effectiveness of Depakote and Depakene for controlling manic symptoms is almost equivalent to that of Lithium; however, it is more effective in rapid-cycling manic-depressive illness, that is, a change from mania to depression and back again over the course of hours or days, rather than months. This seems to also respond to Tegretol and Trileptal, while individuals with mainly depressive mood swings do better on Lamictal.

## **What are the side effects of mood stabilizers?**

Lithium use can cause individuals to experience side effects such as drowsiness, weakness, nausea, vomiting, fatigue, hand tremor, or increased thirst and urination. These usually disappear or subside quickly, although hand tremor may persist. Weight gain may also occur. Kidney changes, accompanied by increased thirst and urination, may develop during treatment. These conditions are generally manageable and are reduced by lowering the dosage.

Because Lithium may cause the thyroid gland to become underactive (hypothyroidism) or sometimes enlarged (goiter), thyroid function monitoring is a part of the therapy. To restore normal thyroid function, thyroid hormone is given along with Lithium. Women of child-bearing age should be aware that Lithium increases the risk of congenital malformations in babies born to women taking Lithium. Special caution should be taken during the first three months of pregnancy.

Lithium, when combined with certain other medications, can have unwanted effects. Some diuretics, substances that remove water from the body, increase the level of Lithium and can cause toxicity. Other diuretics, like coffee and tea, can lower the level of Lithium. Signs of Lithium toxicity may include nausea, vomiting, drowsiness, mental dullness, slurred speech, confusion, dizziness, muscle twitching, irregular heart beat, and blurred vision. A serious Lithium overdose can be life-threatening.

Depakote and Depakene can cause gastrointestinal side effects. Other adverse effects occasionally reported are headache, double vision, dizziness, anxiety, or confusion. Because in some cases these drugs have caused liver dysfunction, liver function tests should be performed prior to therapy and at frequent intervals thereafter, particularly during the first six months of therapy.

Tegretol and Trileptal cause side effects early in treatment that include drowsiness, dizziness, confusion, disturbed vision, perceptual distortions, memory impairment, and nausea. They are usually brief and often respond to temporary dosage reduction. Another common effect is the lowering of the white blood cell count, which requires periodic blood tests to monitor against the rare possibility of more serious, even life-threatening, bone marrow depression. Also serious are the skin rashes that can occur in 15-20% of patients. These rashes are sometimes severe enough to require discontinuation of the medication.

## **Information about Antidepressant Medications**

### **What are antidepressant medications?**

Antidepressants are prescribed to persons with a consistently sad or depressed mood which occur with a number of associated symptoms (disturbed sleep, changed appetite, lack of energy, etc.). Although antidepressants are not "uppers" or stimulants, they take away or reduce the symptoms of depression and help the depressed person feel the way he/she did before becoming depressed.

Antidepressants are also used for disorders characterized principally by anxiety. They can block the symptoms of panic, including rapid heartbeat and breathing, a feeling of terror, dizziness, chest pains, and nausea. The drugs can also be used to treat some phobias, which are irrational fears that sometimes are accompanied by panic attacks.

### **How long does it take for the medications to work?**

When someone begins taking an antidepressant, improvement generally will not begin to show immediately. With most of these medications, it will take one to three weeks before changes begin to occur. Some symptoms diminish early in treatment; others, later. For instance, a person's energy level or sleeping or eating patterns may improve before his depressed mood lifts. If there is little or no change in symptoms after five to six weeks, a different medication may be tried. Some people will respond better to one medication than another. Since there is no certain way of determining beforehand which medication will be effective, the doctor may have to prescribe first one, then another, until an effective one is found. Treatment is continued for a minimum of several months and may last up to a year or more.

### **How long do the medications need to be taken?**

Some people have one episode of depression and then never have another, or remain symptom-free for years. Others have more frequent episodes or very long-lasting depressions that may go on for years. Some people find that their depression becomes more frequent and severe as they get older. For these people, continuing (maintenance) treatment with antidepressants can be an effective way of reducing the frequency and severity of depressions. Those that are commonly used have no known long-term side effects and may be continued indefinitely. The prescribed dosage of the medication may be lowered if side effects become troublesome. Lithium can also be used for maintenance treatment of repeated depressions whether or not there is evidence of a manic or manic-like episode in the past.

## **What kinds of antidepressants are available?**

There are a number of antidepressant medications available. They work mostly the same but differ in their side effects. Tricyclic antidepressants (named for their chemical structure) are more commonly used for treatment of major depressions than are monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs); but MAOIs are often helpful in so-called "atypical" depressions in which there are symptoms like oversleeping, anxiety, panic attacks, and phobias.

The last few years have seen the introduction of a number of new antidepressants, called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), which include fluoxetine (Prozac), fluvoxamine (Luvox), paroxetine (Paxil), and sertraline (Zoloft). Though structurally different from each other, all the SSRIs antidepressant effects are due to their action on one specific neurotransmitter, serotonin. Other recently marketed antidepressants affecting other neurotransmitters are also available, and these include venlafaxine (Effexor) and nefazodone (Serzone). Another of the newer antidepressants, bupropion (Wellbutrin), is chemically unrelated to the other antidepressants. All of these newer antidepressants seem to have less bothersome side effects than the older tricyclic antidepressants.

## **What are the side effects of the tricyclic antidepressants?**

The tricyclic antidepressants, such as amitriptyline (Elavil) and protriptyline (Vivactil), are used less commonly because of their greater likelihood to cause side effects. The side effects with tricyclics may include blurred vision, dry mouth, constipation, weight gain, dizziness when changing position, increased sweating, difficulty urinating, changes in sexual desire, decrease in sexual ability, muscle twitches, fatigue, and weakness. Tricyclics on occasion may complicate specific heart problems, and for this reason the physician should be aware of all such difficulties. Tricyclics also may interact with thyroid hormone, antihypertensive medications, oral contraceptives, some blood coagulants, some sleeping medications, antipsychotic medications, diuretics, antihistamines, aspirin, bicarbonate of soda, vitamin C, alcohol, and tobacco.

## **What are the side effects of the MAO Inhibitors**

MAOIs are rarely used today because of their reaction with certain foods and alcoholic beverages (such as aged cheeses, foods containing monosodium glutamate, commonly known as MSG, Chianti and other red wines), and other medications (such as over-the-counter cold and allergy preparations, local anesthetics, amphetamines, insulin, some narcotics, and antiparkinsonian medications).

## **What are the side effects of the newer antidepressants?**

The most common side effects of the newer antidepressants, such as the SSRIs, include gastrointestinal problems, headache, insomnia, anxiety, and agitation. The drugs are commonly known to cause sexual side effects as well. These include

difficulties having an erection or an orgasm. Not all these medications produce all side effects, and not everybody gets them. Some will disappear quickly, while others may remain for the length of treatment. Some side effects are similar to symptoms of depression (for instance, fatigue and constipation).

Because of potentially serious interaction between these medications and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs), it is advisable to stop taking one medication from two to four or five weeks before starting the other, depending on the specific medications involved. In addition, some SSRIs have been found to affect metabolism of certain other medications in the liver, creating possible drug interactions.

## **Information about Antianxiety Medications**

### **What are antianxiety medications?**

Antianxiety medications help to calm and relax the anxious person. Everyone experiences anxiety symptoms at one time or another. Having “butterflies in the stomach” before giving a speech or sweaty palms during a job interview are common examples. Other symptoms of anxiety include irritability, uneasiness, jumpiness, feelings of apprehension, rapid or irregular heartbeat, stomach ache, nausea, faintness, and breathing problems.

Anxiety is often manageable and mild. But sometimes it can present serious problems. A high level or prolonged state of anxiety can be very incapacitating, making the activities of daily life difficult or impossible. Besides generalized anxiety, other anxiety disorders are panic, phobia, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Phobias, which are persistent, irrational fears and are characterized by avoidance of certain objects, places, and things, sometimes accompany anxiety. A panic attack is a severe form of anxiety that may occur suddenly and is marked with symptoms of nervousness, breathlessness, pounding heart, and sweating. Sometimes the fear that one may die is present.

### **What kinds of antianxiety medications are there?**

There are a number of antianxiety medications currently available. The preferred medications for most anxiety disorders are a group of drugs known by how they are chemically classified, as benzodiazepines. In addition to the benzodiazepines, newer non-benzodiazepines are now available. These include buspirone (Buspar), which is used for generalized anxiety disorders, as well as some drugs used only for insomnia. Antidepressants are also effective for panic attacks and some phobias and are often prescribed for these conditions. They are also sometimes used for more generalized forms of anxiety, especially when it is accompanied by depression. Some antidepressant medications are also used for OCD.

The most commonly used benzodiazepines are alprazolam (Xanax), lorazepam (Ativan), clonazepam (Klonopin), diazepam (Valium), and chlordiazepoxide (Librium, Librax, Libritabs). Benzodiazepines are relatively fast-acting medications; in contrast, buspirone must be taken daily for two or three weeks prior to exerting its antianxiety effect. Most benzodiazepines will begin to take effect within hours, some in even less time. Benzodiazepines differ in duration of action in different individuals; they may be taken two or three times a day, or sometimes only once a day. Dosage is generally started at a low level and gradually raised until symptoms are diminished or removed. The dosage will vary a great deal depending on the symptoms and the individual's body chemistry.



Although benzodiazepines, buspirone, tricyclic antidepressants, or SSRIs are the preferred medications for most anxiety disorders, occasionally, for specific reasons, one of the following medications may be prescribed: antipsychotic medications; antihistamines, such as Atarax, Vistaril, and others; barbiturates, such as phenobarbital; and beta-blockers, such as propranolol (Inderal, Inderide).

### **What are the side effects of antianxiety medications?**

Benzodiazepines have few side effects. Drowsiness and loss of coordination are most common; fatigue and mental slowing or confusion can also occur. These effects make it dangerous to drive or operate some machinery when taking benzodiazepines, especially when the patient is just beginning treatment. Other side effects are rare.

Benzodiazepines combined with other medications can present a problem, notably when taken together with commonly used substances such as alcohol. Consumers should abstain from alcohol when taking benzodiazepines, as the interaction between benzodiazepines and alcohol can lead to serious and possibly life-threatening complications. Benzodiazepines increase central nervous system depression when combined with alcohol, anesthetics, antihistamines, sedatives, muscle relaxants, and some prescription pain medications, so discussing this with your doctor is important.

Particular benzodiazepines may influence the action of some anticonvulsant and cardiac medications. Benzodiazepines have also been associated with abnormalities in babies born to mothers who were taking these medications during pregnancy.

With benzodiazepines, there is a potential for the development of tolerance and dependence as well as the possibility of abuse and withdrawal reactions. For these reasons, the medications are generally prescribed for brief periods of time, days or weeks and sometimes intermittently, for stressful situations or anxiety attacks. For the same reason, ongoing or continuous treatment with benzodiazepines is not recommended for most people. Some patients may, however, need long-term treatment.

Consult with the doctor before discontinuing a benzodiazepine, as a withdrawal reaction may occur if the drug is abruptly stopped. Withdrawal symptoms may include anxiety, shakiness, headache, dizziness, sleeplessness, loss of appetite, and, in more severe cases, fever, seizures, and psychosis. This may be mistaken for a return of the anxiety, since many of the symptoms are similar. In order to prevent these effects when stopping benzodiazepines that have been taken for an extended period, the dosage is gradually tapered.

## **Special Concerns about the Use of Psychiatric Medications in the Elderly**

The elderly generally have more medical problems and often are taking medications for more than one of these problems. In addition, they tend to be more sensitive to medications. Even healthy older people eliminate some medications from the body more slowly than younger persons and therefore require a lower or less frequent dosage to maintain an effective level of medication.

The elderly may sometimes accidentally take too much of a medication because they forget that they have taken a dose and take another dose. The use of a 7-day pill organizer is especially helpful to an elderly person.

The elderly and those close to them, friends, relatives, and caretakers need to pay special attention and watch for side effects and adverse (negative) physical and psychological responses to medication. Because they often take more medications, not only those prescribed but also over-the-counter preparations and home or folk remedies, the possibility of negative drug interactions is higher.

## **Special Concerns about the use of Psychiatric Medications in Women who are Pregnant, Nursing, or of Childbearing Age**

In general, during pregnancy, all medications (including psychiatric medications) should be avoided where possible, and other methods of treatment should be tried. A woman who is taking a psychiatric medication and plans to become pregnant should discuss her plans with her doctor; if she discovers that she is pregnant, she should immediately contact her doctor.

During early pregnancy, there is a possible risk of birth defects with some of these medications. For this reason, Lithium and Benzodiazepines (Valium, Ativan, Restoril) are not recommended during the first three months of pregnancy.

Small amounts of medication pass into the breast milk; this is a consideration for mothers who are planning to breast-feed.

A woman who is taking birth control pills should be sure that her doctor is aware of this. The estrogen in these pills may alter the breakdown of medications by the body, increasing side effects of some antianxiety medications and/or reducing their effectiveness to relieve symptoms of anxiety.

The decision to use a psychiatric medication should be made only after a careful discussion with the doctor concerning the risks and benefits to the woman and her baby.

## Glossary

**Agranulocytosis:** A medical term for “low white blood cell count.” White blood cells help fight infection, so if your white blood cell count gets too low, you may be less protected to fight infections, such as pneumonia.

**Akathisia:** A condition characterized by uncontrollable motor restlessness.

**Akinesia:** The loss or impairment of voluntary activity of a muscle.

**Allergic Reaction:** One or a combination of the following symptoms: swelling in face or hands, swelling or tingling in the mouth or throat, chest tightness and/or trouble breathing.

**Anorexia:** Loss of appetite resulting in too much weight loss and loss of nutrition.

**Drowsiness:** Sleepiness.

**Dystonia:** A movement disorder which results in involuntary contraction of your muscles. Very bad muscle spasms.

**Enzyme:** A chemical normally found in the body, for example, in the liver. Enzyme levels are used to help doctors figure out how a medication is affecting the body.

**Glaucoma:** A group of disorders characterized by progressive damage to the eye, at least partly due to changes in the eye pressure.

**Hyperthermia:** Overheating of the body, very high fever. This occurs when the body cannot regulate and adjust to its heat.

**Impotence:** The inability to initiate or maintain an erection; also called erectile dysfunction.

**Metabolic Syndrome:** A group of related metabolic changes that can lead to diabetes, heart attack and stroke in those at risk.

**Migraine Headaches:** A throbbing headache that causes moderate to severe pain, usually on one side of the head, that is worsened by physical activity, light, sounds and smells, and can sometimes include nausea and vomiting.

**Narcolepsy:** A disorder where a person experiences recurring, unstoppable attacks of sleep during normal waking hours.

**Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome:** A group of symptoms that may occur all at once when taking antipsychotic medications. They include high temperature, muscle stiffness, dizziness, and loss of consciousness. This does not happen very often but can be life-threatening.

**Osteoporosis:** Progressive decrease in the density of bones that weakens them and makes them more likely to break.

**Pancreatitis:** Sudden onset or long-standing inflammation of the pancreas that may be mild or life threatening.

**Prostate:** An organ/gland that is part of a male's reproductive system.

**Seizure:** Behaviors that happen when something irritates the brain, including jerking, spasms of muscles throughout the body, brief loss of consciousness, loss of muscle control, loss of bladder control and confusion.

**Sexual difficulties:** Loss of the ability to enjoy sex or to perform sexually.

**Tardive Dyskinesia:** A neurological condition caused by long-term use of antipsychotic medications. The disorder results in uncontrolled muscle movements which are often untreatable.

**Tourette's Syndrome:** An inherited disorder in which a person suffers from frequent muscle or verbal tics, which are brief, rapid, and purposeless movements or speech.

**Tolerance:** The ability of the body to endure the use of medication.

**Tremors:** Shakes.

**Urinary Retention:** Difficulty in being able to pass urine.

**Uterine:** Involving the uterus, a female reproductive organ.

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