

What every parent needs to know about **Antipsychotic Medications**



WHAT ARE THEY?

Antipsychotic medications are used for many different conditions in children and adults. They work by affecting the way certain chemicals act in your brain.

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS?

- Weight gain
- An increased risk of high cholesterol or fat
- An increased risk of high blood sugar and diabetes
- Low blood pressure
- Sleepiness
- Dizziness
- Headaches
- Dry mouth
- Involuntary movements which in rare cases can be irreversible
- An increase of a hormone called prolactin which can delay sexual maturity and cause abnormal periods in girls
- Some of these medications may cause rare, but possibly life threatening reactions such as:
 - “Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome” with symptoms of high fever, sweating and muscle stiffness
 - Increasing the risk of suicidal thoughts in children
 - Serious blood condition
 - Seizures or inflammation of the heart, or changes in the electrical activity of the heart

WHEN ARE THEY PRESCRIBED?

Antipsychotic medications are used to treat serious mental conditions such as bipolar disorder, psychosis and autism related behaviors. They are also sometimes used to manage aggressive behaviors in children and adolescents.

HOW DO I DECIDE?

Informed consent means the doctor explains the benefits and risks of treatment and you give permission. You have the right to refuse treatment for your child.

However, it is important to consider that the long term effects of antipsychotic medications are not fully understood. Discuss the risks and benefits of medication with your child’s doctor because special caution should be used when prescribing these medications to children and adolescents with developing brains and nervous systems.

Other treatment approaches may include therapy, social skills training, parent education, and changes to your child’s education program.





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DISCUSS WITH THE DOCTOR

- How well medicines other than antipsychotics might work to help your child's symptoms
- Non-medicine treatments
- The risks and benefits of taking an antipsychotic or adding one to treatment
- Which antipsychotic medicine might work best for your child based on his or her age and condition
- The possible side effects from taking an antipsychotic, especially weight gain, drowsiness, and uncontrollable movements like tics and tremors
- The risk for a serious side effect
- Ways to help you notice side effects so they can be treated or so the medicine can be changed
- Which treatment option best fits your likes, dislikes, and values
- The cost of each medicine

ASK THE DOCTOR

- Which medicine are you considering for my child? Why?
- How long will it take for the medicine to start working?
- Which symptoms might the medicine improve and how can we monitor progress?
- What serious side effects should I look for and when should I contact the doctor?
- How much weight might my child gain from taking an antipsychotic? When should I contact you about my child's weight gain?
- Is my child at risk for having high cholesterol, high blood sugar, or diabetes if he or she takes an antipsychotic?
- How long will my child have to take the medicine?
- What will we do if the medicine stops working?
- Are there other treatment options besides medicines? If so, what are they?