

Medications may be useful in treating symptoms of pediatric mental health conditions. In most cases medications are used along with evidence based psychosocial treatments. Discuss all medications child's treatment team (doctor, pharmacist, and therapist). Additional resources can be found at www.utahpips.org/upop.

Antipsychotic Medications

Antipsychotics are for psychiatric symptoms seen in conditions like schizophrenia, aggression and irritability in autism and severe tic problems. All of these medications require careful consideration and should always be used together with evidenced based psychosocial treatment. Most children respond well to one medication and therefore two antipsychotics are generally not required.

Most Effective Antipsychotics:

- **Second generation antipsychotics** (also known as atypical and are more commonly used in children) include: Aripiprazole (Abilify), Risperidone (Risperdal), Quetiapine (Seroquel), Ziprasidone (Geodon), Lurasidone (Latuda), Olanzapine (Zyprexa), and Asenapine (Saphris)

Other Antipsychotic Medication:

- **First Generation Antipsychotics** (rarely used in children) include: Chlorpromazine (Thorazine), and Haloperidol (Haldol).

Side Effects:

The most common side effects of second generation antipsychotics include restlessness, dizziness or fainting, increased appetite, rapid weight gain, drowsiness, nausea, heartburn, night tremors, and decrease sexual interest. Other side effects are cardiac changes, tremors, or muscle stiffness, and increased risk of seizures (especially at high doses). Common long term side effects can include metabolic side effects (weight gain, increased blood lipids and blood sugar) and involuntary muscle movements.

First generation antipsychotics are associated with higher rates of involuntary movement, muscle stiffness and tremors.

Monitoring & Safety:

It is very important that children and adolescents visit their doctor regularly while taking an antipsychotic. This provides the doctor the opportunity to monitor their heart rate, blood pressure, and weight gain. Blood tests to monitor blood sugar and blood lipids are required when starting the medication and at regular intervals during the course of medication. It is important to take your child for all lab work ordered by the doctor. Some people stop taking the medication because they feel better or they may feel that they do not need it anymore, but no one should stop taking an antipsychotic medication without talking to the doctor.



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Antipsychotics should be gradually tapered off— never stopped suddenly. There is a rare but serious reaction to second generation antipsychotics; Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome. If your child experiences marked muscle stiffness, high fever, racing heartbeat, fainting spells, and a general sense of feeling very ill seek immediate medical attention. Refer to the resource below for more specific medication information.

Resources:

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP):

https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/resource_centers/resources/med_guides/parentsmedguide_bipolar.pdf

https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications/index.shtml#part_149866