

# Medication

## Summary of medication for early psychosis:

1. Treatment usually begins with an atypical antipsychotic medication
2. The goal is to relieve symptoms and prevent relapse
3. The lowest possible dose will be used to help avoid side effects

## Antipsychotic Medication

Medication is essential in the treatment of psychosis. It relieves symptoms of psychosis and is critical in preventing relapses.

There are many different medications available to treat psychosis. These medications are called *antipsychotics* (or sometimes neuroleptics).

The antipsychotic medications are usually divided into two categories:

1. Typical antipsychotics  
- includes haloperidol, loxapine and many others
2. Atypical antipsychotics  
- includes risperidone, olanzapine, quetiapine, ziprasidone and clozapine

## Side Effects of Antipsychotics

Atypical antipsychotics are usually tried first because they have fewer side effects.

The antipsychotics differ in terms of side effects.

Many side effects diminish over time and some people do not experience any side effects.

Some common side effects of the atypical antipsychotics include:

- tiredness
- dry mouth
- blurred vision
- weight gain

Your EPI psychiatrist and clinician will closely monitor for side effects.

If bothersome side effects develop, it may be recommended to lower the dose, add a medication to reduce side effects or try a different medication.

## Response to Antipsychotic Medication

Treatment begins with a low dose of medication that may gradually be increased over time - this will help prevent side effects.

It may take several weeks or even months for the medication to have its full effect.

If the first antipsychotic medication does not produce satisfactory results, then usually a different antipsychotic will be tried.

Clozapine is often effective for people who have not responded to other antipsychotics.

## Duration of Antipsychotic Treatment

It is recommended that you continue taking medication even after symptoms of psychosis are gone.

There is very high risk of relapse if medication is discontinued too soon.

Talk with your EPI psychiatrist to find out how long you should remain on medication.

## Other Medications

There are other medications that might be used, along with an antipsychotic, depending on the symptoms you have experienced.

For example, antidepressants or mood stabilizers might be used for problems with mood.

Whenever you are prescribed a medication, be sure to find out what symptoms it is meant to help with and what side effects are associated with it.

## Remembering to take Medication

Remembering to take medications every day can be difficult.

Some people find that keeping their medication next to something they use the same time every day is helpful (e.g., keeping medication next to toothbrush). Other people find that using a pill container that organizes medications by the day of the week is useful.

If you are having problems remembering to take your medication, talk to your EPI psychiatrist or clinician who can help you find memory strategies that work for you.