

Long Acting Injectable Antipsychotics (LAIs)

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What are LAIs?

Long-acting injectables (LAIs) are a type of medication used to treat schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. They're called "long-acting" because they release the medication slowly over time, usually for a few weeks or months, after a single injection. This helps people stay on track with their treatment without needing to take pills every day

How do LAIs work?

- LAIs contain the same medications found in oral (pill) versions, but instead of being taken by mouth, they are injected, usually into the muscle.
- After the injection, the medication is slowly released into the body over time.
- This helps keep the levels of the medication steady in the body, which can reduce symptoms of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, such as mood swings, hallucinations, or delusions.

What are the different LAIs available for Schizophrenia?

1. Aripiprazole (Abilify Maintena, Aristada)

- Abilify Maintena: Administered once a month.
- Aristada: Administered every 4 to 8 weeks.

2. Risperidone (Risperdal Consta)

- Administered every 2 weeks.

3. Paliperidone (Invega Sustenna, Invega Trinza)

- Invega Sustenna: Administered once a month.
- Invega Trinza: Administered every 3 months (for patients who've been stabilized on Invega Sustenna).

4. Olanzapine (Zyprexa Relprevv)

- Administered every 2 to 4 weeks.

5. Haloperidol (Haldol Decanoate)

- Administered every 4 weeks.

6. Fluphenazine (Prolixin Decanoate)

- Administered every 2 to 4 weeks.

What are the different LAIs available for Bipolar Disorder?

1. Aripiprazole (Abilify Maintena, Aristada)

- Available for schizophrenia but also used in bipolar disorder maintenance treatment, especially for mania or mixed episodes.

2. Risperidone (Risperdal Consta)

- Also used for bipolar disorder, particularly in managing mania.

3. Paliperidone (Invega Sustenna)

- Used off-label for bipolar disorder, particularly for mania or mixed states.

4. Olanzapine (Zyprexa Relprevv)

- Commonly used for acute manic episodes and as maintenance therapy in bipolar disorder.

What are some of the benefits of LAIs?

- Convenient: Since the injection lasts for weeks or months, it reduces the need for daily medication. This can make it easier for people to stick to their treatment plan.
- More consistent: LAIs can help maintain stable medication levels in the body, which can be harder to achieve with daily pills.
- Better treatment adherence: For some people, remembering to take pills every day can be challenging. LAIs make it easier to stay on treatment, which can improve long-term health outcomes.

What are potential side effects of LAIs?

Like any medication, LAIs can cause side effects, although not everyone experiences them. Common side effects might include:

- Injection site reactions: This can include pain, redness, or swelling at the site of the shot.
- Weight gain or changes in appetite: Some people may notice an increase in weight.
- Drowsiness or sedation: Some people feel more tired than usual.
- Movement problems: In rare cases, people might experience shaking or stiffness.
- Mood changes: Some people might feel more depressed or anxious.

What to expect with LAIs?

- Frequency: LAIs are typically given by a healthcare provider every few weeks or months, depending on the specific medication.
- Getting the injection: The injection is usually given in a clinic or doctor's office by a nurse or doctor. Some people may be able to get the injection at home after proper training.
- Important to stick with the plan: Since LAIs work over time, it's important to continue the injections as scheduled, even if someone feels better. Stopping treatment early can lead to a relapse of symptoms.
- LAIs are just one part of a treatment plan for schizophrenia or bipolar disorder. People taking LAIs might also receive therapy, counseling, and lifestyle support to help manage the condition. Regular follow-ups with the healthcare provider are important to monitor progress, adjust the medication if needed, and address any concerns.