

# RARE SIDE EFFECTS OF ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS

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# WHY TALK ABOUT RARE SIDE EFFECTS?



MOST PEOPLE TAKE  
ANTIPSYCHOTICS SAFELY



RARE SIDE EFFECTS ARE  
UNCOMMON BUT  
IMPORTANT TO RECOGNIZE  
EARLY



EARLY TREATMENT CAN  
PREVENT SERIOUS  
COMPLICATIONS

# WHY DO SIDE EFFECTS HAPPEN?

- Antipsychotics affect brain chemicals that also control movement, metabolism, and hormones
- Different medications have different side effect profiles
- Dose, duration, and individual factors matter

## COMMON SIDE EFFECTS (MORE LIKELY)

- Sleepiness or fatigue
- Weight gain or increased appetite
- Dry mouth or constipation
- Dizziness when standing up
- Mild tremor or restlessness

# MANAGING COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Many improve as your body adjusts
- Lifestyle changes can help (diet, activity, hydration)
- Dose adjustments or medication changes are possible
- Always talk to your provider before stopping a medication

## RARE VS SERIOUS SIDE EFFECTS

- Rare side effects happen infrequently
- They can be serious if not treated early
- Knowing warning signs helps keep you safe

## NEUROLEPTIC MALIGNANT SYNDROME (NMS) – RARE

- A very rare but life-threatening reaction
- Symptoms: high fever, severe muscle stiffness, confusion
- Other signs: fast heart rate, sweating, unstable blood pressure
- This is a medical emergency – go to the ER immediately

## HEART RHYTHM CHANGES (QT PROLONGATION)

- Some antipsychotics can affect the heart's electrical system
- Risk increases with certain heart conditions or medications
- Symptoms: fainting, dizziness, fast or irregular heartbeat
- EKGs may be used to monitor risk
- Tell your doctor if you have heart disease or take heart medications

## LOW WHITE BLOOD CELL COUNT (AGRANULOCYTOSIS)

- Most commonly linked to clozapine
- Lowers the body's ability to fight infection
- This can increase the risk of serious infections
- Symptoms: fever, sore throat, flu-like illness
- Regular blood tests greatly reduce risk

## INFLAMMATION OF THE HEART (MYOCARDITIS)

- Rare side effect, most often with clozapine
- Usually occurs early in treatment
- Symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, fatigue
- Usually occurs early in treatment
- Report symptoms right away

## UNCONTROLLED MOVEMENTS (TARDIVE DYSKINESIA)

- Involuntary movements of the face, tongue, or body
- Risk increases with long-term use
- May be permanent if untreated
- Early detection allows treatment or medication changes
- Tell your doctor right away if you notice new or unusual movements

# SEIZURES

- Rare side effect, but possible at higher doses
- Higher risk if you have a seizure disorder
- Any seizure activity should be reported immediately

## WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR OR SEEK HELP

- Fever, muscle stiffness, confusion
- Chest pain, fainting, or irregular heartbeat
- Signs of infection (fever, sore throat)
- New or worsening involuntary movements

## IMPORTANT REASSURANCE

- Most people take antipsychotics safely
- Your healthcare team monitors for side effects
- Benefits often outweigh risks when monitored properly

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Antipsychotics help treat serious mental health conditions
- Common side effects are usually manageable
- Rare side effects are uncommon but important to recognize
- Never stop medication without talking to your doctor
- Regular follow-ups and labs improve safety
- Your healthcare team is here to help