

Aripiprazole Injection

(pronounced ari-pip-ra-zole)

(Also known as aripiprazole depot and Abilify Maintena™)

Why has aripiprazole injection been prescribed?

Aripiprazole injection is an antipsychotic used to treat schizophrenia and other similar conditions. Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis. They also shorten the time to recovery and help prevent relapses.

What are the benefits of taking aripiprazole injection?

Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis. They also shorten the time to recovery and help prevent relapses. The main advantage of a long-acting injection (or depot) is that there is no need to remember to take tablets daily. There is also less fluctuation in the amount of the drug in the body and as such side effects may be less severe than with the tablets or oral formulations.

Are there any precautions with aripiprazole injection?

Aripiprazole injection is suitable for most people. As with all medicines, however, there are precautions. Your prescriber will usually check that it is safe to prescribe aripiprazole injection, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you have severe liver problems.
- b) if you are taking any other medication, especially medicines to lower blood pressure, antidepressants, anticonvulsants, antifungal medicines such as ketoconazole or itraconazole and HIV medicines. Also, tell your prescriber if you buy any medicine 'over the counter' from a pharmacy or supermarket. Please also tell your prescriber if you take any alternative or complementary medicine such as Chinese herbal medicines.
- c) if you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

What is the usual dose of aripiprazole injection?

You will need to be taking oral daily aripiprazole and be stable on the tablets or liquid form before switching to the long acting injection. You will continue to take oral aripiprazole for 2 weeks after taking the first dose of the injection. The first dose of the injection is 400mg. After this the injection will be given monthly and the dose will usually be 400mg. This may sometimes be reduced if you experience side effects.

How should aripiprazole injection be given?

Aripiprazole injection is given every month, by deep intramuscular injection into the gluteal muscle which is in the buttocks. This will usually be given to you by a nurse on a ward, clinic or GP surgery.

What form does aripiprazole injection come in?

Aripiprazole is available as tablets, dispersible tablets, liquid, short acting injection and long acting injection. The long acting injection can be used instead of taking daily tablets or liquid. The long acting injection is available as 400mg.

What should be done if a dose is missed?

The next injection should be given as soon as possible. This may mean making an extra appointment at the clinic or hospital.

What will happen when aripiprazole injection is first given?

Aripiprazole injection, like many medicines, does not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience some side effects. We have listed potential side effects in the table below, whether or not they are likely to be short or long-term and what measures can be taken is also described. There are other possible side effects – we have listed only the most important ones. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect. Further information on side effects is available in the official manufacturer's leaflet.

Reporting side effects

The 'Yellow Card' scheme encourages patients to report any side effects that they feel may be caused by their medication. Ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse for the forms if you wish to report any side effects. Alternatively, telephone 0800 100 3352 or go to www.mhra.gov.uk.

Is aripiprazole injection addictive?

No, aripiprazole is not addictive.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people receiving aripiprazole injection should not drink alcohol. This is because both antipsychotics and alcohol can cause drowsiness. If the two are taken together, severe drowsiness can result. This can lead to falls and accidents. As well as this, drinking alcohol may make psychosis worse. However, once people are used to receiving medication, then *very small amounts* of alcohol may not be harmful. It pays to be very careful, because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are receiving medication. Never drink alcohol and drive. Discuss any concerns you may have with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

Is it OK to stop taking aripiprazole injection when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop receiving aripiprazole injection your original symptoms are very likely to return. Most people need to be on aripiprazole for quite a long time, sometimes years. You should always discuss any plans you have to reduce or stop any of your prescribed medicines with your prescriber.

Are there any alternatives to aripiprazole injection?

Yes, there are alternatives available. Overall, antipsychotics have broadly similar therapeutic effects, except for clozapine which is effective when other antipsychotics have failed. Antipsychotics differ in their side effects. With the range of medicines now available, a suitable and acceptable antipsychotic can usually be found for everyone.

Summary of side effects

Side effect	Side effect
<p>Nausea - Common (with or without vomiting)</p> <p>What can be done about it? This tends to wear off over time. Some people find that it helps to take the medicine with some food and in the morning. Speak to your prescriber if this side effect does not wear off within a few days.</p> 	<p>Insomnia - Common</p> <p>What can be done about it? This tends to wear off over time. If you have been taking the medication at night, switch to the morning. If your sleep continues to be disturbed, report to your prescriber.</p> 
<p>Dizziness – Common</p> <p>What can be done about it? This may wear off within a few days. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.</p> 	<p>Agitation – Common (feeling restless and worried)</p> <p>What can be done about it? This tends to wear off over time. If it does not improve after a few days, speak to your prescriber about it.</p> 
(Other less common) side effects	How common is it and what can be done about it?
Drowsiness	Uncommon If affected, then take the medicine at night. Be careful with driving if you still feel drowsy in the morning. This often lessens with time.
Headache	Uncommon This should wear off within a few days. Paracetamol can be taken but discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Tachycardia (palpitations)	Very rare Some people feel their heart beating faster when they start aripiprazole. This is more likely in the first few weeks of treatment. Discuss with your prescriber if this persists.
Constipation	Very rare Eat lots of fibre – fruit and vegetables are good sources. You should also drink plenty of fluids. If necessary your prescriber may prescribe a laxative.

Very common = almost everyone affected Common = many people affected Uncommon = some people affected
Rare = few people affected Very rare = very few or no one affected

Disclaimer

This leaflet is to help you understand more about your medication. This is not an official manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (see <http://www.medicines.org.uk/emc/>). Remember, leaflets like this can only describe some of the effects of medication. You may also find other books or leaflets useful. If you have access to the internet you may find a lot of information there as well, but be careful, as internet based information is not always accurate. If in doubt consult your GP or a health care professional.

This leaflet has been supplied by:

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