

Aripiprazole

(pronounced ari-pip-ra-zole)

Why has aripiprazole been prescribed?

Aripiprazole is an antipsychotic used to treat schizophrenia. It is sometimes used in other conditions.

What are the benefits of taking aripiprazole?

Antipsychotics are effective in reducing the symptoms of psychosis. They also shorten the time to recovery and help prevent relapses.

Are there any precautions with aripiprazole?

Aripiprazole 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, but let your prescriber know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- a) if you suffer from liver problems.
- b) if you are taking any other medication, especially antidepressants, medicines for epilepsy or blood pressure tablets, antifungals such as ketoconazole and itraconazole or HIV medications. 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.
- d) If you have an intolerance to lactose as this is an ingredient of aripiprazole tablets (but not the orodispersible tablets or solution).

What is the usual dose of aripiprazole?

The starting dose is usually 5mg or 10mg a day. This is sometimes increased slowly over a few weeks. The usual dose of aripiprazole may be between 10 and 30mg. It may take a few weeks to get to the dose that is most suitable.

How should aripiprazole be taken?

Aripiprazole is usually taken once a day, in the morning. However, you and your prescriber may decide that it is better for you to take the medicine at another time.

What form does aripiprazole come in?

Aripiprazole is available as tablets, orodispersible tablets, solution, a short acting injection and a long acting injection form. The tablets are available as 5mg, 10mg, 15mg and 30mg. The orodispersible tablets as 10mg and 15mg and the solution comes as 1mg per 1ml.

What should be done if a dose is missed?

If you forget a dose, take it as soon as you remember, as long as it is within a few hours of the usual time. If you miss a whole day's dose – just carry on as normal with the next day's dose. If you miss more than a day's dose, speak to your prescriber.

What will happen when aripiprazole is first taken?

Aripiprazole, like many medicines, does not work straight away. For example, it may take several days or even weeks for some symptoms to improve. To begin with, some people find that aripiprazole may help them feel more alert and less sedated. Later, (usually in two or three weeks) other symptoms should begin to improve. Many people do not experience any side effects. However some people may experience 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 for patients.

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 addictive?

No, aripiprazole is not addictive. However, if you stop taking aripiprazole suddenly, you may experience unpleasant physical feelings.

What about alcohol?

It is recommended that people taking aripiprazole 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 taking 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 taking 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 when symptoms go away?

No. If you stop taking aripiprazole, 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?

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.

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