



Mental Health America of Franklin County

2323 W. Fifth Ave. Suite 160, Columbus, OH 43204

Telephone: (614) 221-1441 Fax: (614) 221-1491

info@mhafc.org

www.mhafc.org

Medications/Treatments: General Guidelines

A Guide For Families, Friends, Board And Care Homes, Caregivers And Patients

Prescription medications are helpful in reducing symptoms in people suffering with a mental illness. As with any medication, there are precautions to be taken, and careful monitoring is needed to reduce any risk and maximize the benefits of medications. It is important for you and others to be familiar with how these medications are used.

How Do Medications For Mental Health Work?

Some mental illnesses are due to chemical imbalances in the brain. These chemicals are neurotransmitters. They are the messengers within the brain, which enable communication between different areas of the brain and the body. When there are disturbances in the functioning of these neurotransmitters, the communication system in the brain can be disrupted. Medications can correct the imbalance of these chemicals in the brain and restore healthy neurotransmitter communication. Medications can reduce the symptoms of an acute attack and prevent recurring illness.

Tell Your Doctor If You:

- Have had allergic reactions to drugs or food
- Are taking any other medications
- Are pregnant or breast-feeding
- Have diabetes, kidney, liver or heart disease
- Are on a special diet or taking any supplements
- Smoke or drink alcohol
- Stop taking the prescribed medications
- Feel side effects

There are 5 major categories of mental health medications: (1) anti-depressant, (2) anti-psychotic, (3) anti-anxiety, (4) Lithium and (5) stimulant medications. Ask your doctor what category of medications you are taking.

Remember:

- Take all medications only as prescribed by your doctor.
- Check your prescription with your pharmacist.
- Know your medication.
- Follow directions and read the label carefully.
- Store medications properly.
- Never stop medications on your own.
- Ask about special precautions.
- Find out about possible side effects.

- Keep your doctor informed about any side effects you may have.

If you have any questions or problems call your doctor, therapist and/or pharmacist.

Please Note: Only your doctor should prescribe these medications.

The 5 Major Categories Of Mental Health Medications

(1) ANTI-DEPRESSANTS

Generic Names

Amitriptyline
Amoxapine
Citalopram
Clomipramine
Desipramine
Doxepine
Fluoxetine
Fluvoxamine
Imipramine
Isocarboxazid
Maprotiline
Moclobemide
Nefazodone
Nortriptyline
Paroxetine
Phenylzine sulfate
Protriptyline
Selegiline
Sertraline
Tranlycypromine
Trazodone
Bupropion
Venlafaxine

Brand Names

Elavil, Endep, Amitril
Asendin
Celexa
Anafranil
Norpramin, Pertofrane
Sinequan, Adapin
Prozac
Lurox
Tofranil
Marplan
Luidomil
Aventyl, Pamelor

What Are Anti-psychotics Used For?

Anti-psychotic medications are used to treat Schizophrenia. This disease causes distorted thinking, confusion of reality and fantasy, and hallucinations. Anti-psychotics can reduce or stop these experiences.

Aurorix
Desyrel
Paxil
Nardil
Deprenyl
Vivactil
Zoloft
Parnate
Desyrel
Wellbutrin
Effexor

(2) ANTI-PSYCHOTICS

Generic Names

Chlorpromazine
Fluphenazine
Haloperidol
Loxapine
Mesoridazine
Molindone
Perphenazine
Thioridazine
Thiothixene
Trifluoperazine
Clozapine
Ziprasidone
Risperidone

Brand Names

Thorazine
Prolixin
Haldol
Loxitane
Serentil
Moban
Trilafon
Mellaril
Navane
Stelazine
Geodon
Clozaril*
Risperdal*

What Do They Do?

Anti-psychotics treat schizophrenia by supplying some of the chemicals that make you feel organized and concentrated. Anti-psychotic meds help reduce excitability, confusion, and withdrawal. They improve your ability to communicate, to separate reality from fantasy and control hallucinations.

Side Effects: Sleepiness, dry mouth, dizziness, blurred vision, rapid heartbeat, stuffy nose and constipation may occur. Also, muscle spasms, restlessness, muscle stiffness, trembling, and shaking hands may occur. These effects often disappear in 1 to 2 weeks. Tardive dyskinesia, which is an involuntary movement of the face or mouth, may occur while taking anti-psychotics. It is sometimes irreversible.

Precautions: The same precautions apply as with anti-anxiety medications, however, anti-psychotics are not addictive.

(3) ANTI-ANXIETY MEDICATIONS

Benzodiazepines

Alprazolam
Clonazepam
Chlorazapate
Chlordiazepoxide
Diazepam
Flurazepam
Lorazepam
Nitrazepam

What Are They Used For?

These medications may be used to treat anxiety (an unreasonable state of tension and uneasiness, not ordinary tension), insomnia (difficulty sleeping), tension, and sometimes muscle spasms.

What Do They Do?

Anti-anxiety medications treat anxiety by supplying some of the missing chemicals that make you feel relaxed and calm. They can provide mild sedation and relief from tension and anxiety.

Side Effects: Sleepiness, slurred speech, confusion, headaches, nausea, breathing difficulties (rarely), nervousness, or excitement may occur.

Precautions:

- Avoid barbiturates and alcohol if taking these meds. The combination can be DEADLY.
- Do not operate a car or machinery until you are sure that the medication does not adversely affect you.
- If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, consult your doctor about possible risks.
- If taken for a long period of time, these medications can be addictive.

(4) LITHIUM

Generic name

Lithium carbonate

Oxazepam
Temazepam
Triazolam
Xanax
Klonopin
Tranxene

Librium
Valium
Dalmane
Ativan
Mogadon
Serax
Restoril
Halcion

Non-Benzodiazepines

Buspirone HCl*
Buspar
Zolpidem
Ambien

*Buspirone lacks sedative and muscle relaxant effects.

Brand name

Eskalith
Lithane

What Is It Used For?

Lithium may be used to treat mania (overly self-confident, reckless, uncontrollable, sleepless, and excited), or manic depression (alternating between mania and depression).

What Does It Do?

Lithium adjusts some of the chemicals that make you feel happy and confident, stabilizes your mood, and controls highs and lows. It helps prevent mania and manic-depression from recurring. Lithium may take 4-14 days to take effect.

Side Effects: During the first 5 days of treatment it may cause nausea, cramps, thirst, and muscle weakness. 5 to 6 weeks after treatment has begun muscle weakness, fatigue, weight gain and slightly impaired memory may occur. Other more serious effects include diarrhea, vomiting, severe shakiness, and lack of coordination.

Precautions:

- Be aware of your salt intake. A low salt concentration in your body can cause fatigue, slurred speech and trembling. In severe cases, coma or death may result.

- Blood tests are necessary to make sure Lithium levels are safe and effective.
- If you are pregnant or breast feeding, consult your doctor about possible risks.
- Stopping this medication may result in relapse.

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5) STIMULANT MEDICATION

Generic Name

Methylphenidate
 Caffeine
 Deanol
 Pemoline
 Dextroamphetamine

Brand Name

Ritalin
 NoDoz, Caffedrine
 Deaner
 Cylert
 Dexedrine, Adderall

What Are They Used For?

This medication is used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

What Do They Do?

Stimulant medications can improve attention span, decrease distractibility, increase ability to finish tasks, improve ability to follow directions, decrease hyperactivity and improve ability to think before acting.

Side Effects: These often stop after two weeks or if dose is lowered by the doctor; trouble falling asleep, headaches, stomachaches, crankiness, rapid pulse, or increased blood pressure. Serious side effects include muscle twitches or tics, sadness which lasts more than a few days and unusual behavior. These should be reported to your doctor immediately.

Precautions: Addiction is not seen in young children using this medication as recommended for hyperactivity, but may occur in adolescents or adults using it without proper supervision. For this reason, keep this medication where it will not be abused by others.

(Note: A child may not grow as fast as usual while taking this medication. Growth usually catches up once medication is stopped. Height and weight should be monitored regularly.)

Mental Health America of Franklin County is a private, not-for-profit organization, established in 1956. We help people navigate the mental health system. We are dedicated to promoting mental health in Franklin County through advocacy, education, and support services. Our programs include: information and referral to community mental health and alcohol/drug services; free support groups for people with mental illness and their families; an Ombudsman program that assists clients in navigating the mental health and alcohol/drug system; mental health screenings in English and Spanish; Pro Bono Counseling Program where underinsured and uninsured individuals can receive free counseling; community and professional mental health education including Get Connected; maternal mental health support and advocacy (POEM); and a quarterly newsletter featuring legislative updates and new happenings at MHAFC. We receive funding from the Franklin County ADAMH Board, United Way of Central Ohio, individuals, foundations, and corporations. To become a member or find out more information, please visit us online at www.mhafc.org.