

Fast Facts:

What you should know about antipsychotic drugs and persons living with dementia

What is an antipsychotic drug?

- Antipsychotic drugs are approved to treat certain types of mental illness, such as schizophrenia.
- Antipsychotic drugs are also approved to help treat some symptoms of depression and bipolar disorders.
- Antipsychotics can effectively treat symptoms of psychosis, such as believing things that aren't true or real (delusions), and seeing or hearing things that aren't there (hallucinations).

Do antipsychotics help people with dementia?

- These medications can *sometimes* help people living with dementia who have certain symptoms of psychosis, such as:
 - Seeing or hearing things that aren't there
 - Believing things that aren't true or real
 - Severe physical aggression/violence toward themselves or others

Do antipsychotics treat any other symptoms related to dementia?

- Antipsychotics do not usually help when a person acts in a way that is difficult or disturbing to others, such as:
 - Yelling, screaming, or repetitive speech
 - Refusing care or bathing
 - Aimless wandering
 - Crying, banging
 - Throwing things

Why do people living with dementia behave in ways that are difficult to manage?

Most of the time, these actions are the person's way of communicating distress or need. These actions are often triggered by something that they find scary, upsetting, uncomfortable, or painful. Sometimes these actions are the only way the person can express themselves. Some common causes of behavioral expressions:

Pain, hunger, or thirst

Needing to go to the bathroom

Feeling rushed or overwhelmed

Feeling bored, lonely, or sad

Experiencing confusion or fear

Fatigue

What are the names of some antipsychotic medications?

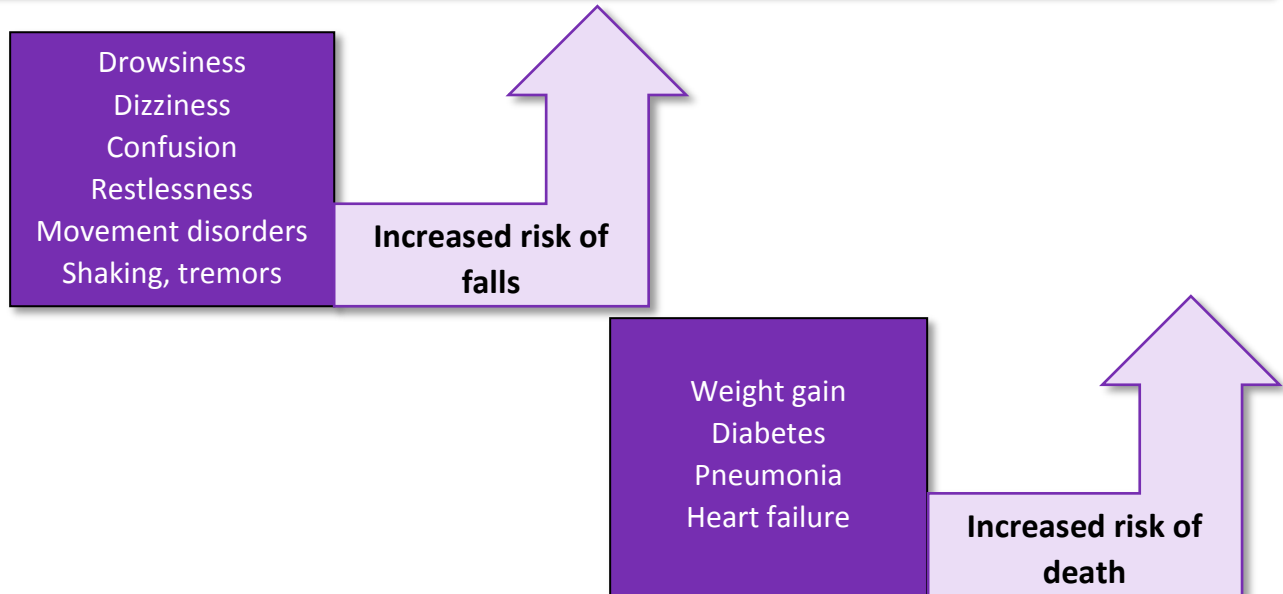
Original or “typical” antipsychotics

Haloperidol (Haldol®)
 Thioridazine (Mellaril®)
 Fluphenazine (Prolixin®)
 Chlorpromazine (Thorazine®)
 Perphenazine (Trilafon®)

Newer or “atypical” antipsychotics

Risperidone (Risperdal®)
 Olanzapine (Zyprexa®)
 Quetiapine (Seroquel®)
 Ziprasidone (Geodon®)
 Aripiprazole (Abilify®)

What are some of the side effects of taking an antipsychotic medication?



What can I do if my loved one is already taking an antipsychotic drug or their provider wants to prescribe one?

Ask questions.	Be an advocate. Health care staff will never know as much as you do about your loved one. Stay involved in their care & help answer questions like:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the name of the drug? • Why is this drug being prescribed? • Are there any side effects or possible drug interactions to be aware of? • What is the goal while taking this medicine? • What is the plan for monitoring, reevaluating, decreasing and/or stopping this medication? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does your family member express being scared, angry, anxious, or hungry? • What things do they find comforting and calming? • What has been their typical daily routine and sleeping pattern? • Are there specific actions that upset your loved one, triggering anxiety or agitation? • What strategies have worked when responding to their behavioral expressions?
<p>Sometimes these medicines are beneficial, but they should be used as a last resort and should always be closely monitored.</p>	