

# Typical Antipsychotic Depot Injections

## Patient Information - Hillmorton Hospital Pharmacy

### Why have I been prescribed a depot antipsychotic injection?

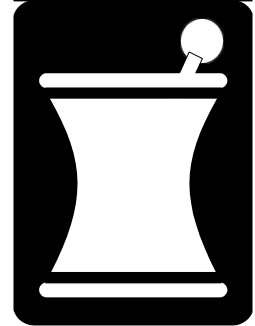
Schizophrenia and similar disorders are sometimes referred to as psychoses or a psychotic illness, hence the name given to this group of medicines which is “antipsychotics”.

Depot Antipsychotics are given in to the muscle by injection and used to treat schizophrenia, psychosis and similar conditions.

With schizophrenia, many people hear voices talking to them or about them. They may also become suspicious, paranoid or fearful. Some people also have problems with their thinking and feel that other people can read their thoughts. These are called “positive symptoms”. Antipsychotic depot injections can help to relieve these symptoms.

Many people with schizophrenia also experience “negative symptoms”. They feel tired and lacking in energy and may become quite inactive and withdrawn.

Antipsychotic depot injections may help relieve these symptoms as well helping to manage agitation, anxiety, mania or hypomania and some other conditions.



### What exactly is a typical antipsychotic depot injection?

A typical antipsychotic depot is when an antipsychotic medication is combined with another chemical called a decanoate and this is dissolved in oil to make the injection. When injected into a muscle, it creates a store or ‘depot’ of medication which is released slowly into the body over several weeks.

Some examples of depot antipsychotic injections are flupenthixol decanoate (Fluanxol®), haloperidol decanoate (Haldol®), and zuclopenthixol decanoate (Clopixol®).

### Are antipsychotic depot injections safe to have?

It is usually safe to have antipsychotic depot injections regularly as prescribed by your doctor, but they don’t suit everyone.

Let your doctor know if any of the following apply to you, as extra care may be needed:

- If you have epilepsy, diabetes, Parkinson’s disease or glaucoma, or suffer from heart, liver, kidney, thyroid, or prostate trouble.
- If you are pregnant, breast feeding, or wish to become pregnant.

## **How are depot antipsychotic injections given?**

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First of all, a test dose (which is a very low dose) of the injection is given to see how your body copes with it. If the test dose does not cause a bad reaction, then your doctor will trial you on a depot injection. Depot injections are usually given once every two to four weeks. How often will depend on the medicine, the dose required and your response to treatment.

The injection is usually given into a muscle in the buttock or thigh.

## **What happens if I miss an injection?**

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You should contact your nurse/doctor as soon as you remember. They will probably arrange for another injection to be given to you.

## **When I feel better, can I stop having my injections?**

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No. If you stop having your injections, your original symptoms may return, but this may not be for three to six months after you stop the medicine. You and your doctor should decide together when you can come off it. Most people need to be on antipsychotic depot injections for quite a long time, sometimes years. Typical antipsychotic depot injections are not addictive.

## **What will happen to me when I start on a typical anti-psychotic depot injection?**

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Typical antipsychotic depot injections do not work straight away. It may take several days or even weeks for some of your symptoms to reduce. To begin with, most people find that this medication will help them feel more relaxed and calmer. Later, after one or two weeks, other symptoms should begin to improve.

You might get some side effects before you start to feel any better. Most side effects should go away after a few weeks. Look at the table over the page. It tells you what to do if you get any of the usual side effects. Not everyone will get the side effects shown. There are many other possible side effects.

Ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse if you are worried about anything else that you think might be a side effect.

## **Are there any medicines I should avoid or take care with?**

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Typical antipsychotic depot injections can interact with other medicines. Consult with your doctor or pharmacist before starting new medicines and remember to tell your pharmacist what you are taking before purchasing any medicines over the counter.

## **What about alcohol and marijuana?**

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It is recommended that you do not drink alcohol, use marijuana or other recreational drugs. These taken with antipsychotics can make you feel drowsy. They can lessen the effect of the antipsychotic medication and you feel clumsy which can lead to falls or accidents. As well as this, using recreational drugs can make your psychosis worse.

Once you are used to your antipsychotic you can sometimes drink alcohol in small amounts without any harm. If you want a drink, try a glass of your normal drink and see how you feel. If it doesn't make you feel drowsy and clumsy, it is probably okay to drink small amounts. It pays to be cautious because alcohol affects people in different ways, especially when they are taking medication.

It is recognised that many road accidents occur because of mixing alcohol, marijuana or other recreational drugs with these medicines.

## **What is the metabolic syndrome?**

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Antipsychotics can occasionally cause something called the metabolic syndrome. This is a combination of weight gain, raised blood fats called cholesterol and raised blood sugars. Some antipsychotics are more likely to cause the metabolic syndrome than others. When you start an antipsychotic, your weight, height and waist will be measured.

A reading of your heart called an ECG and several blood tests will be performed and these will be repeated several times during the first year that you are on an antipsychotic to ensure that you remain healthy.

It is important when you start an antipsychotic that you eat a healthy diet and that you do some exercise. Talk to your case manager or doctor for advice about this. They may also offer to refer you to a dietitian.

**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. Be careful as internet-based information is not always accurate.**

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SIDE EFFECT	WHAT IS IT?	WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THIS HAPPENS TO ME?
<b>Common</b>		
Akathisia	You feel restless, unable to feel comfortable unless you are moving.	Tell your doctor about this. It may be possible to change your drug or dose, or give you something to reduce these feelings.
Blurred Vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus properly.	See your doctor if you are worried.
Constipation	Feeling "bunged up" inside. You can't pass a bowel motion.	Eat more fibre, e.g. bran and vegetables. Do more walking. Make sure you drink plenty of fluid. A mild laxative from a pharmacy might help.
Dry Mouth	Your mouth will feel dry and you will not produce much saliva (spit). Dry mouth can cause problems with speech, taste, chewing and swallowing. It can also increase the risk of getting dental decay and infection in your mouth.	To help prevent dental problems sip water regularly to moisten your mouth. Brush your teeth twice a day with fluoride toothpaste. Avoid sugary drinks and snacks between meals. Try sugar free chewing gum to stimulate saliva or discuss using an oral lubricant with your pharmacist or dentist.
Movement Disorders	Feeling shaky or having a tremor. Your neck may twist back. Your eyes and tongue may move on their own.	It is not usually dangerous. If it is bad or worries you, tell your doctor. They can give you something for it.
Weight Gain	Eating more and putting on weight.	Try and avoid putting on weight in the first place. Eat a healthy diet full of vegetables and fibre and do physical activities such as walking. Avoid fatty foods like chocolate and crisps and high sugar foods such as cakes, sweets and fizzy drinks. Ask to see a dietitian if you need help with food choices.
<b>Less Common</b>		
Drowsiness	Feeling sleepy or sluggish.	Don't drive or use machinery. As your treatment continues you should feel less drowsy.
Hypotension	A low blood pressure. You may feel faint when you stand up.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive.

Raised Prolactin	Prolactin is a natural hormone we all have. High levels can cause a lack of interest in sex, affect periods in women or cause impotence in men. It may also cause breast tenderness and milk secretion in men as well as women.	This is not usually troublesome Discuss this with your doctor anyway. It may be that a change in dose or different drug will help.
<b>SIDE EFFECT</b>	<b>WHAT IS IT?</b>	<b>WHAT SHOULD I DO IF IT HAPPENS TO ME?</b>
<b>Less Common</b>		
Swelling around injection site	Injection site feels painful and lumpy.	Report it to your nurse. Warm baths and regular exercise like walking can help.
Urinary Retention	Difficulty in passing urine, or not much urine passed.	Contact your doctor now.
<b>Very Rare</b>		
NMS	Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome includes a high body temperature, muscle stiffness and being unable to move.	It usually occurs within a few weeks of a dose change. Contact your doctor immediately. Keep cool, with fans or cool water.