

Aripiprazole for schizophrenia, bipolar disorder and tics

This leaflet is about the use of aripiprazole for the treatment of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder (sometimes called psychotic disorders) and tics, such as seen in Tourette's syndrome



This leaflet has been written for parents and carers about how to use this medicine in children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adult patients. Please read this leaflet carefully and refer to it again when needed.

Do not stop giving aripiprazole suddenly, as your child is likely to get withdrawal symptoms.

Name of drug

Aripiprazole (AR-i-PIP-ra-zole)

Brand name: Abilify®

Why is it important for my child to take this medicine?

Aripiprazole changes the levels of some important chemicals in the brain such as dopamine and serotonin.

- For children with schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, aripiprazole can reduce your child's symptoms and help their mood and behaviour to be more stable.
- For children with tics, aripiprazole will help to reduce the severity and frequency of tics.

Read more about tics here: www.nhs.uk/conditions/tics/

What is aripiprazole available as?

- **Tablets:** 5 mg, 10 mg, 15 mg, 30 mg; these contain lactose
- **Orodispersible tablets:** 10 mg, 15 mg; these contain a small amount of aspartame
- **Liquid medicine:** 5 mg in 5 mL

When should I give aripiprazole?

Aripiprazole is usually given **once** a day. This is usually in the morning. Give the medicine at about the same time each day so that this becomes part of your child's daily routine, which will help you to remember.

How much should I give?

Your doctor will work out the amount of aripiprazole (the dose) that is right for *your* child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

Your doctor may suggest that your child has a low dose to start with. They may then increase the dose as your child gets used to the medicine and depending on how your child responds to it.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.**

How should I give it?



Tablets should be swallowed with a glass of water, milk or juice. Your child should not chew the tablet.

Orodispersible tablets: Ensure your hands are dry before removing the tablet from the pack. Put it on your child's tongue straight away. The tablet will dissolve rapidly. You can also dissolve it in a glass of water. Your child should drink it all straight away.



Liquid medicine: Measure out the right amount using an oral syringe or medicine spoon. You can get these from your pharmacist. Do not use a kitchen teaspoon as it will not give the right amount.

When should the medicine start working?

This depends on what your child is being treated for.

- If your child has been agitated as part of their illness, this should decrease after taking an adequate dose of aripiprazole for a few days.
- If your child is being treated for elated mood (being extremely happy), they should seem calmer after about a week of reaching the adequate dose.
- If your child gets hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there), these should start to get better after about 2 weeks. It may take longer than this for delusions (believing something to be real that is not) to stop. It may take 6–8 weeks before your child's mood and behaviour seem more normal.
- If your child is being treated for tics or Tourette's syndrome, it is likely to take 4–6 weeks for symptoms to get better.

It is important that you continue to give the medicine every day, as your doctor has told you to. However, as the medicine may not work sufficiently in some children, if you are concerned about whether it is working, contact your doctor.

What if my child is sick (vomits)?

- If your child is sick less than 30 minutes after having a dose of aripiprazole, give them the same dose again.
- If your child is sick more than 30 minutes after having a dose of aripiprazole, you **do not** need to give them another dose. Wait until the next normal dose.

If your child is sick again, seek advice from your GP, nurse, pharmacist or hospital. They will decide what to do based on your child's condition and the specific medicine involved.

What if I forget to give it?

Give the missed dose when you remember during the day, as long as this is at least 12 hours before the next dose is due.

 Never give a double dose of aripiprazole.

What if I give too much?

 It may be dangerous to give too much aripiprazole.

If you think you may have given your child too much aripiprazole, contact your doctor or your local NHS services (111 in England and Scotland; 0845 4647 in Wales) or take your child to hospital. Take the medicine container or packaging with you, even if it is empty. This will be useful to the doctor. Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Are there any possible side-effects?

We use medicines to make our children better, but sometimes they have other effects that we don't want (side-effects).

Side-effects you must do something about

 Contact your doctor **straight away** if your child has any of the following:

- muscle spasms (stiffening of the muscles), twitching in the face and body, or uncontrolled movements of the tongue or jaw
- they become restless and cannot control their movements
- fever, sore throat, rash or mouth ulcers.

Other side-effects you need to know about

- Your child may feel sleepy, tired or weak when they first start taking this medicine. These effects usually wear off as your child's body gets used to the medicine. If they are still a problem after 2 weeks, contact your doctor.
- Your child may get stomach ache and feel sick. They may also get constipated (have difficulty doing a poo). Make sure they eat food that contains fibre (e.g. wholemeal bread, rice, pasta, fruit and vegetables) and that they drink plenty. If this is still a problem after 2 weeks, contact your doctor.
- Your child may feel light-headed or dizzy when they stand up, or may faint. This is because aripiprazole may lower the blood pressure. They should stand up slowly, and should lie down for a while if they feel dizzy. If this becomes a problem, contact your doctor, as your child's blood pressure may be too low.
- Your child may find that their eyesight seems blurred. If this carries on for longer than 2 weeks, contact your doctor.
- Your child's appetite may increase and this may result in weight gain.
- Your child's skin will be more sensitive to sunlight and they are more likely to get sunburn. When outdoors they should keep their skin covered, use high-factor sun screen and wear a hat, especially in the summer.
- Rarely, your child may feel very low (depressed) or have thoughts about suicide. Contact your doctor if this happens.

Can other medicines be given at the same time?

- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol or ibuprofen, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Aripiprazole should not be taken with some medicines that you get on prescription. Tell your doctor and pharmacist about any other medicines your child is taking **before** giving aripiprazole.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal or complementary medicines.

Is there anything else I need to know about aripiprazole?

 **Do not** suddenly stop giving your child aripiprazole, as they may get withdrawal symptoms (difficulty sleeping, tremor, anxiety, nausea and vomiting).

- If you or your child wants to stop aripiprazole, discuss this with your doctor. They may want to reduce the dose slowly so that your child doesn't get withdrawal symptoms.

 **Do not** change the dose without talking to your doctor first.

- Teenagers should be aware that if they drink alcohol while taking aripiprazole, the effects will be stronger. Ideally, they should not drink alcohol.
- Aripiprazole can affect the ability to do skilled tasks such as driving.

General advice about medicines

- Try to give the medicine at about the same time each day, to help you remember.
- Only give this medicine to *your* child. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.

 If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor straight away.

- Make sure that you always have enough medicine. Order a new prescription at least 2 weeks before you will run out.
- Make sure that the medicine you have at home has not reached the 'best before' or 'use by' date on the packaging. Give old medicines to your pharmacist to dispose of.

Where should I keep this medicine?

- Keep the medicine in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight. It does not need to be kept in the fridge.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.
- The liquid medicine does not keep for long once it has been opened. Write the date that you start it on the bottle.

Who to contact for more information

Your doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about aripiprazole. You can also get useful information from:

England: NHS 111 - Tel 111 - www.nhs.uk

Scotland: NHS 24 - Tel 111 - www.nhs24.com

Wales: NHS Direct - Tel 0845 46 47 (2p a minute) or 111 (free) www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland: NI Direct - www.nidirect.gov.uk

Mind - Tel 0845 766 0163 - www.mind.org.uk

Young Minds - Tel 0808 802 5544 www.youngminds.org.uk

Tourettes Action - Tel 0300 777 8427 www.tourettes-action.org.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk