

Dementia Antipsychotic Guide

Monitoring for Response and Side Effects

Monitoring for Response

- Clearly document** treatment target symptoms and whether they improve. The drug should be stopped if it does not help. Symptoms may change over time, with or without drug treatment.
- Do not expect an immediate response.** Sedation from the drug may explain much of any effect seen in the first few days.
- Do not ask for higher doses too quickly.** It may take several days to a week or more to see the full effect, depending on the drug (talk to prescriber for details). **Higher doses cause more side effects.**

Monitoring for Side Effects

Side Effect	Report to RN or prescriber if these problems occur
<i>Movement Side Effects</i>	Tremors, tight muscles, changes in walking or falls, abnormal movements like face or eye twitching, drooling.
<i>Central Nervous System</i>	
Sedation	Sleepiness, slow to respond, hard to wake up.
Confusion, delirium, or other cognitive worsening	Worsening mental status compared to normal. Seems more confused; sedated or agitated; worsened communication abilities; problems paying attention; slower movements or speech. These may be a sign of a serious medical illness or a drug side effect.
Worsening psychotic symptoms (delusions or hallucinations)	<u>Hallucinations</u> : seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting or feeling things that aren't there. <u>Delusions</u> : false fixed beliefs that a person holds in spite of evidence they aren't true. Antipsychotics usually lessen these symptoms, but sometimes make them worse.
<i>Cardiovascular / Metabolic</i>	
Rapid drop in blood pressure on standing	Signs of dizziness or falls. Check an orthostatic blood pressure by checking the blood pressure when lying down then again shortly after standing. Drugs sometimes cause an unwanted drop in blood pressure.
Swelling	Swelling is most common in the legs and ankles, but can occur in other places.
Weight gain	Big increases in appetite. Hungry even after eating. Unwanted increases in weight.
High blood sugar	Confusion, increased thirst, frequent urination, unusual tiredness, blurred vision. Blood sugar can be checked to see if this might be the cause of these symptoms.
<i>Urinary Symptoms</i>	Changes in frequency—increased, or decreased with urinary retention. Worsened incontinence. Pain on urination. May be infection or drug-related problem.
<i>Constipation</i>	Fewer bowel movements. Hard stools. Poor appetite. Gut pain or distention.