

## Aripiprazole (pron. 'arry-pip-ra-zole)

### What is aripiprazole used for?

Aripiprazole (also known as Abilify®) is mainly used to help treat the symptoms of psychosis, schizophrenia and mania. It can also be used to help depression (with antidepressants) and in a crisis. It is known as a 'neuroleptic', 'antipsychotic' or wrongly as a 'major tranquilliser'. Aripiprazole is made as tablets, melt-in-the-mouth tablets, an injection and a syrup.

### What is the usual dose of aripiprazole?

The usual dose of aripiprazole is around 10-30mg a day (morning or evening is usual).

### How should I take aripiprazole?

Swallow the tablets with at least half a glass of water whilst sitting or standing. This is to make sure that they reach the stomach and do not stick in your throat. For the liquid, use a medicine spoon, dropper or oral syringe. Use it carefully to make sure you measure the correct amount. For the melt-in-the-mouth tablets, just put them on your tongue and they will dissolve quickly.

### When should I take aripiprazole?

Take your aripiprazole as directed on the medicine label. Take it at regular times each day. Taking it at mealtimes may make it easier to remember as there is no problem about taking aripiprazole with or after food.

### What are the alternatives to aripiprazole?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. There are many other antipsychotics, talking therapies and treatments for psychosis and mania. See our "Handy charts" to help you compare the medicines, how they work and their side effects.

### How long will aripiprazole take to work?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice.

### How long will I need to keep taking aripiprazole for?

This will depend on what you are taking it for. Please look at one of the "Handy charts" for more help and advice. It could be months or years to help stop the symptoms coming back.

### Is aripiprazole addictive?

Aripiprazole is not addictive.

### Can I stop taking aripiprazole suddenly?

It is unwise to stop taking it suddenly, even if you feel better. Your symptoms can return if treatment is stopped too early. This may occur some weeks or even months after aripiprazole has been stopped. When the time comes, you should withdraw aripiprazole by a gradual reduction in the dose over several weeks. You should discuss this fully with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

### What should I do if I forget to take a dose of aripiprazole?

Take the missed dose as soon as you remember unless it is within about 12 hours of your next dose. If you remember after this just take the next dose as normal. Do not try to catch up by taking two doses at once as you may get more side-effects. If you have problems remembering your doses (as many people do) ask your pharmacist, doctor or nurse about this. There are some special packs that can be used to help you remember.

### Can I drink alcohol while I am taking aripiprazole?

If you drink alcohol while taking aripiprazole it may make you feel more sleepy. This is particularly important if you need to drive or operate machinery and you must seek advice on this.

### Will aripiprazole affect my other medication?

Aripiprazole has only a few interactions with other medicines.

- The effects of aripiprazole can be decreased by carbamazepine
- The effects of aripiprazole can be increased by ketoconazole (an antifungal)
- If aripiprazole is taken with benzodiazepines, or alcohol, it may cause more sleepiness.

- You should have no problems with "The Contraceptive Pill" and aripiprazole
- Not all of these interactions happen in everyone. Some of these medicines can still be used together but you will need to follow your doctor's instructions carefully. There are many other possible drug interactions.

### What sort of side-effects might occur if I am taking aripiprazole?

The table below will show you some of the main side effects you might get from aripiprazole. Some of these are more marked when you start aripiprazole and usually wear off in a few weeks.

Side effect	What happens	What to do about it
<b>COMMON</b> ( <i>more than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Akathisia	Being more on edge or restless. You may sweat a lot more.	Try and relax by taking deep breaths. Wear loose fitting clothes. This happens much more at the start of treatment but does wear off in a few weeks. Your doctor may think about giving you a medicine to help this for a few weeks.
Stomach upset	This includes feeling and being sick and getting diarrhoea.	This usually improves after the first few days. If it is severe discuss with your doctor.
Constipation	When you want to poop but can't (the opposite of diarrhoea). You can't pass a motion.	Make sure you eat enough fibre, cereal or fruit. Make sure you are drinking enough fluid. Keep active and get some exercise e.g. walking. If this does not help, ask your doctor or pharmacist for a mild laxative.
Headache	When your head is painful and pounding.	Ask your pharmacist if paracetamol is safe to take with any other medicines you may be taking
Insomnia	Not being able to get to sleep at night.	Discuss with your doctor. He or she may change the time of your dose. This happens much more at the start of treatment and you may need some sleeping tablets for a couple of weeks
Blurred vision	Things look fuzzy and you can't focus your eyes properly.	Don't drive. See your doctor if you are worried. You won't need glasses.
Tremor	Fine shaking of the hands	This is not dangerous but can be irritating. If it annoys you, your doctor may be able to give you something for it.
<b>UNCOMMON</b> ( <i>less than about 1 in 10 people might get these</i> )		
Postural hypotension	A low blood pressure - this can make you feel dizzy, especially when you stand up.	Try not to stand up too quickly. If you feel dizzy, don't drive.
Seizures	Having a fit or convulsion	If you have a fit or funny turn, stop taking the aripiprazole and contact your doctor immediately.
Palpitations	A fast heart beat.	It is not dangerous. It can be treated if it lasts for a long time.

Do not be worried by this list of side effects. Some people get no side effects at all and others may get some effects that are not listed in this table. If you think you might have a side effect to your medicine, you should ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist. If you want to know more, go to our website for links to other websites with more information.

### Will I need a blood test if I am taking aripiprazole?

You should not need a blood test while you are taking aripiprazole.

### Can I drive or cycle while I am taking aripiprazole?

You may feel a bit sleepy at first when taking aripiprazole. You should be careful as it may slow down your reaction times. Until this wears off, or you know how aripiprazole affects you, do not drive or operate machinery.

**The small print:** This leaflet is to help you understand about your medicine. You should also read the manufacturer's Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). You may find lots more on the internet but beware as internet-based information is not always accurate. Do not share medicines with anyone else. Go to our website for fuller answers to these and many other questions e.g. driving, women's health, how it works, doses and interactions, and about the conditions. The "Handy charts" will help you compare the main medicines for each condition, how they work and their side effects.