

# Physical Health Monitoring of Antipsychotic Medications

Patient Information Leaflet



## Introduction

Antipsychotic medications are used to help manage a number of different problems but they all have similar side effects. Our team will help you to manage any side-effects through regularly monitoring you whilst you are taking antipsychotic medications. This leaflet will explain:

- Why we monitor antipsychotics
- How we monitor antipsychotics
- When you will need to have monitoring

## Why we monitor

Antipsychotic medications have a number of side-effects including:

- Sleepiness
- Weight gain
- High blood pressure
- High blood sugar levels
- High blood fats (cholesterol/triglycerides)
- Dizziness
- Problems with movement such as shakes, stiffness, slowness
- Sexual problems
- Breast tenderness
- Irregular periods/changes to your periods

You might not always be aware of side-effects if they are slight and you may not associate them with your medication, so it's important we look for and monitor any side-effects.

Through monitoring we can:

- Pick up and act on side-effects which may cause you problems
- Watch out for any changes that may increase your risk of diabetes and heart disease and take action to manage this
- Monitor changes that might make it unsafe to carry on taking antipsychotic medications.

## **How we monitor**

We have a Physical Health Clinic, staff at the clinic will monitor you whilst you are taking antipsychotic medication. They will check:

### **Blood**

We do a range of blood tests which monitor your:

- Liver
- Kidneys
- Cholesterol and fat levels
- Full blood count
- HbA1c – tells us about how well your body manages sugar levels
- Prolactin – a hormone that can go up in the body which causes sexual side effects and changes to your periods.

### **Weight**

We monitor your weight and measure your waist circumference, as weight gain is associated with health problems. We also calculate your BMI.

### **Heart health**

If you have underlying health conditions, it may be recommended that you have an electrocardiogram (ECG).

An ECG tells us about your heart rhythm. We get this by putting stickers over your chest and connecting these to the machine which then detects your heart rhythm. We may also measure your blood pressure and heart rate.

### **Side effect monitoring**

We will regularly ask you to complete a questionnaire about possible side effects that you may be experiencing.

## When we monitor

Everyone prescribed antipsychotic medication is offered monitoring.

If you are prescribed clozapine, you will need to have additional monitoring on a weekly, fortnightly or monthly basis. You will be informed of this.

If you are prescribed a high dose of antipsychotics, you will require more frequent physical health monitoring. You will be advised about this.

We'll invite you for appointments at:

- Weekly monitoring for the first six weeks. (The first appointment will be within two weeks of starting your medication) then;
- Three months after starting medication and then
- 12 months after starting medication

After the first year your GP may take over your physical monitoring. You may then only need to be monitored once a year for as long as you are prescribed antipsychotic medication.

Not all checks are necessary at each appointment. The following table tells you what checks to expect and when:

	Within two weeks of starting medication	Weekly for six weeks	After one month	Three months*	12 months	Yearly
<b>Blood tests</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Blood pressure and heart rate</b>	✓ (may be done regularly while your dose is optimised)		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>ECG</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓ (If recommended)	✓ (If recommended)
<b>Weight and Body Mass Index</b> (may include waist measurement)	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
<b>Side effects check</b>	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Lifestyle review</b>	✓				✓	✓

**\* If you are prescribed Olanzapine three month checks take place again at six months and nine months.**

We recommend that you attend the monitoring clinics, but they are not compulsory. Sometimes there is value in remaining on the medications even where we do not have the full monitoring arrangements in place. As you are the decision maker in your care, we will be happy to discuss these arrangements with you.

## **Further information**

If you have any queries about your medication please contact:

**Pharmacy Medicines Information helpline,**

**Tel: 0191 245 6604**

The helpline is available 9am – 4pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays).

A voicemail facility operates at all other times.



## **What if I have a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint about the service?**

If you want to make a comment, suggestion, compliment or complaint you can:

- talk to the people directly involved in your care
- ask a member of staff for a feedback form, or complete a form on the Trust website  
[www.cntw.nhs.uk/contact/complaints/](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/contact/complaints/)
- telephone the Complaints Department Tel: 0191 245 6672
- email [complaints@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:complaints@cntw.nhs.uk) Please note that information sent to the Trust via email is sent at your own risk

We are always looking at ways to improve services. Your feedback allows us to monitor the quality of our services and act upon issues that you bring to our attention. You can provide feedback in the following ways:

- the quickest way for you to do this is to complete our short online survey at [www.cntw.nhs.uk/poy](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/poy)
- complete a Points of You survey, available on wards, reception areas or from staff
- other options for sharing your feedback and experience  
[www.cntw.nhs.uk/yourfeedback](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk/yourfeedback)

### **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS provide confidential advice and support, helping you to sort out any concerns that you may have about any aspect of your or your loved ones care.

We act independently when handling patient and family concerns, liaising with staff, managers and, where appropriate, relevant organisations, to negotiate prompt solutions. If necessary, we can also refer patients and families to specific local or national-based support agencies.

## **North of Tyne**

Tel: 0800 032 0202

Email: [pals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@nhct.nhs.uk)

Post: FREEPOST PALS

## **South of Tyne**

Tel: 0800 328 4397

Text: 07825 061 035

Email: [pals@cntw.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@cntw.nhs.uk)

Post: Patient Advice and Liaison Service, Garden Lodge,  
Hopewood Park, Ryhope, Sunderland, SR2 0NB  
9am – 4.30 pm, Monday to Friday

An answerphone is available at all times for you to leave a message. A member of the PALS team will aim to return your call as soon as possible.

## References

- Prescribers Guide, Stephen M Stahl 5<sup>th</sup> Edition
- Maudsley Prescribing Guidelines in Psychiatry, 13th Edition, David Taylor, Carol Paton, Shitij Kapur – Wiley Blackwell
- Monitoring requirements for adult patients prescribed antipsychotics (except clozapine) (CNTW PPT-PGN-08)
- Psychosis and schizophrenia in adults: prevention and management Clinical guideline (CG178)



Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, easy read, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre  
Tel: 0191 246 7288

Published by the Patient Information Centre

2024 Copyright, Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear  
NHS Foundation Trust

Ref, PIC/787/0224 February 2024 V4

[www.cntw.nhs.uk](http://www.cntw.nhs.uk) Tel: 0191 246 7288

Review date 2027

Find us on social media, search for CNTW