



Mid-Valley Behavioral Care Network

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Aripiprazole (Abilify)

The medication Aripiprazole (**Abilify**) is an **atypical** neuroleptic. It is used to treat psychosis and other mental health issues including mania, depression, and extreme irritability.

Psychosis can be experienced as disorganized thinking or behavior and unusual perceptions (hearing voices, seeing things, feeling paranoid). Mania includes poor sleep, racing thoughts and severe mood swings. Depression is intense sadness that lasts for most days of the week. Generally these symptoms interfere with your life goals. There may be other reasons someone takes Abilify. Abilify is used in children, adolescents and adults.

It is FDA approved for the treatment of Schizophrenia (adults/adolescents), Bipolar Disorder (children, adolescents and adults), Major Depression Disorder (adults), and the behavior issues associated with Autistic Spectrum Disorders like Autism and Asperger's.

Although Abilify can be very helpful, it can cause some side effects that you should know of before accepting treatment with it. The most common include: **restlessness, anxiety, or muscle stiffness**. Although these effects generally occur during initial treatment, some remain throughout treatment and may warrant discontinuing the medication. Talk with your provider about it.

Recently, neuroleptics have been found to be associated with diabetes and weight gain, high cholesterol, and high triglycerides. Though serious, these side effects are uncommon. Nevertheless, it is important to talk to your provider about these issues. Specifically, Abilify is very unlikely to cause problems in this area. Yet these issues have been observed with medications within the same class as Abilify.

Abilify is different from older **typical** neuroleptics in that it is less likely to cause EPS (ExtraPyramidal Side effects). But in the rare instances that these may occur they include tremor, muscle stiffness or spasms, abnormal movements of the mouth, tongue, extremities. These are usually benign and can be treated with side effect medication. Tardive Dyskinesia

(unusual movements of the mouth, tongue, arms) and NMS (high fever, racing heart, agitation, sweating) although rare, are serious side effects of the older **typical** neuroleptics. These effects are considerably lower with Abilify.

The beneficial effect of Abilify can sometimes take 3-5 days to three weeks, sometimes longer. The maximum effect can sometimes take as long as 9-12 months. Generally if no effect is felt after 6 weeks, then a different medication or different dosage should be considered. The dosage range includes 2-10 mg if you are being treated for depression, 15-20 mg for psychosis, and 20-30 mg for mania. These are just general guidelines; you and your provider may find other dosage ranges to be helpful.

Abilify is generally safe with other medications. But as with all medications, please let your provider know if you are engaged in other treatments. There are no dietary restrictions associated with Abilify.

There are supplemental ways to improve life which include:

- exercise**
- good sleep habits**
- good eating habits (high fish diet/fish oil)**
- yoga**
- a hobby**
- visiting with family or friends**
- psychotherapy**

Although important, these methods alone cannot restore clear thinking and stable mood.

If you have further questions about this medication, please ask your medical provider or your pharmacist.

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