



Your Guide to Abilify Maintena[®]

Understanding your treatment

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This booklet has been developed by Lundbeck Ireland Ltd., for patients who have been prescribed Abilify Maintena (also known as aripiprazole prolonged-release suspension for injection). It will help to answer some of the questions you have about your medicine and should be used in conjunction with the Patient Information Leaflet which you will find in your Abilify Maintena pack.

If you have any questions about receiving Abilify Maintena, please talk to a nurse or doctor on your treatment team.

Information found within this booklet

1. Understanding schizophrenia
2. Managing your condition
3. Treatment with Abilify Maintena
4. Establishing a healthy treatment routine
5. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle

1. Understanding schizophrenia

What is schizophrenia?

Schizophrenia is a chronic and severe illness that affects the brain and can interfere with a person's ability to think clearly, manage emotions, make decisions and relate to others.

It is important to remember that schizophrenia is a treatable illness and it is possible to have a fulfilled life with schizophrenia.

You are the expert on your own illness and can work with your treatment team to manage it in the best way. In addition to engaging with the lifestyle, psychological and medicines advice provided, always seek help from the treatment team or trusted friends or family if you experience any warning signs that you are becoming unwell.

Most patients with schizophrenia experience recurring episodes of symptoms (relapses) of varying duration and frequency. In between these episodes symptoms may improve or recover.

Schizophrenia symptoms are often separated into two groups, 'positive' and 'negative', however this doesn't mean that the symptoms are good or bad.¹

Positive symptoms are behaviours or experiences that you start to have with schizophrenia and may include:

- Hallucinations (hearing voices, seeing or feeling things that are not there)
- Delusions (believing things that are not real or true)
- Disorganised speech and behaviour (difficulty remembering things or organising thoughts)

People with schizophrenia can sometimes experience a reduction in, or lack of certain behaviours or experiences. This is referred to as negative symptoms, and may include:

- Feeling disconnected from your emotions
- A lack of motivation (hard to start and keep up activities)
- Limited thoughts
- No longer enjoying everyday activities or spending time with people

It is important to remember that not everyone will experience all of the symptoms described above.

2. Managing your condition

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What is it like to have schizophrenia?¹

Many different experiences and behaviours can be part of schizophrenia. For some, these experiences can start suddenly, whilst others may find they develop gradually over time. Each person's experience of schizophrenia is unique to them.

You may find that you:

- Struggle to carry on with day-to-day activities, like going to work or shopping
- Become easily upset or confused
- Disagree with people who think something is wrong and want to help
- Feel worried or afraid about seeking help
- Have difficulty in knowing which of your thoughts and experiences are real and which are not

What causes schizophrenia?^{1,2}

The cause of schizophrenia isn't yet known but it is thought to be caused by a combination of genetic, physical, psychological and environmental factors, not just one.

Some of the possible causes that increase the chances of developing schizophrenia may include:

- Stressful life events – for example losing your job, being abused or losing someone close to you
- Recreational drug use
- A family history of schizophrenia
- If some chemicals in the brain, such as dopamine, are present at altered levels





Living with schizophrenia

Although there isn't currently a cure for schizophrenia, many symptoms may get better with treatment. You may have periods in which your symptoms return (relapses) but support and treatment may help to reduce the risk of this and provide symptom control.

After the initial symptoms of schizophrenia are controlled, various types of therapy can be beneficial in helping to manage the illness and help provide an improved quality of life. For many people living with schizophrenia, family support is very important to their health and wellbeing.

How is schizophrenia treated?

Schizophrenia is usually treated with a combination of medicine and therapy, tailored to each individual's needs. Antipsychotic medicines are commonly prescribed by doctors as the initial treatment to help with schizophrenia. They work by blocking the effect of the neurotransmitter (body's chemical messenger) dopamine on the brain.

Antipsychotics can usually reduce feelings of anxiety or aggression within a few hours of use, but may take several days or weeks to reduce other symptoms, such as hallucinations or delusional thoughts.

Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) is a type of talking treatment that can help with patterns of thinking or behaviour that may be causing difficulties. This type of therapy is designed to help you cope with some of your symptoms.

3. Treatment with Abilify Maintena

What is Abilify Maintena?

Abilify Maintena is a slow-release antipsychotic medicine. It is for the maintenance treatment of schizophrenia in adults and may help to keep the symptoms of schizophrenia under control.

How is it given?

Abilify Maintena is given by injection into the muscle. The medicine is slowly released into the body which means that each injection lasts for a month, and (after the first treatment period) you do not have to remember to take tablets every day.

If you and your doctor agree to start Abilify Maintena, your doctor will advise you on the dose and the first treatment that is right for you. In order to obtain enough medicine in your body, the first treatment will involve **either** one injection and continued treatment with aripiprazole tablets by mouth for 14 days, **or** two injections (in different muscles) and one tablet of aripiprazole on the first day of treatment.

Abilify Maintena will then be given to you as a single injection, once a month, by a member of your treatment team. This will either be given into the buttock or shoulder and the injection site will alternate between your right and left side.

Will it be painful?

You may feel a little pain at the injection site, either in your arm or buttock during your injection but this is normal and should pass quickly. However not everyone will find it painful.



What do I need to know when starting treatment?

If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, planning to have a baby or think that you may be pregnant, ask your doctor for advice before taking this medicine.

Do not drive or use any tools or machines until you know how Abilify Maintena affects you as dizziness, sedation and sleepiness have been reported as potential side effects of this medicine.

If at any time you have feelings, thoughts or impulses of self-harm or of harming others while taking Abilify Maintena, contact your doctor or go to a hospital straight away. Your doctor may need to adjust your medicine.

Alcohol should be avoided whilst taking Abilify Maintena. Check the *Other medicines and Abilify Maintena* section of the Patient Information Leaflet and talk to your doctor or nurse about any other medicine you are taking or have taken recently, including medicines obtained without a prescription.



How could Abilify Maintena help me?²

Abilify Maintena may help to reduce the symptoms associated with schizophrenia and therefore reduce your chances of experiencing confused thoughts, delusions and hallucinations. It may also help you feel more like yourself and may make you feel more able to meet up with friends again or carry on with activities you enjoy.

Because everyone is different, each person may respond differently to treatment and it is best that you talk to your treatment team about your expectations for feeling better.

Contact your doctor if you don't feel that the medicine is working well for you, or if you are concerned about side effects. Your doctor may recommend that you try a different medicine which may suit you better.

What if I miss an injection?

If you miss an injection, the level of the medicine in your body will start to reduce which may increase the risk of you becoming unwell again. You should be given an injection every month, but not before 26 days have passed from the last injection. If you miss a dose it is important that you contact your treatment team or doctor as soon as you can, so that they can reschedule your injection appointment.





What is the usual length of treatment?

Many people need to take medicine in the long term even if they feel well. This is in order to decrease the risk of symptoms coming back (even when you are taking the medicine they sometimes do come back). Your doctor will advise.

If you want to stop taking your medicine you should always talk to your doctor or treatment team first. They will help you decide if stopping is the best thing for you and if so, how you should stop.

Remember, the reason you are getting this monthly injection is to help control the symptoms associated with schizophrenia and the best way to do this is to make sure that you don't miss a dose.

What side effects have been reported with Abilify Maintena?

Like all medicines, Abilify Maintena may cause side effects, although not everybody experiences them. There is often a trade off between easing symptoms and having to put up with some side effects from your medicine. Your treatment team will monitor you for side effects. Speak to your treatment team if you are bothered by side effects. Your doctor may recommend that you try a different medicine which may suit you better.

If you notice that you are gaining weight, develop unusual movements, experience sleepiness that interferes with normal daily activities or dizziness that leads to falls, have any difficulty in swallowing, allergic symptoms or thoughts of self-harm or of harming others, please talk to your doctor immediately.

The Patient Information Leaflet, which you will find in your pack of Abilify Maintena, is also a useful source of information and lists side effects that may occur. Please ask your doctor or nurse for a leaflet.

REPORTING OF SIDE EFFECTS

If you get any side effects, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. This includes any possible side effects not listed in the package leaflet. You can report side effects directly to the HPRA (Health Products Regulatory Authority) at www.hpra.ie.

By reporting side effects you can help provide more information on the safety of this medicine.

Can I take other medicines with Abilify Maintena?

Please tell your doctor or nurse about any other medicines you are taking and they will advise you. You can also check the *Other medicines and Abilify Maintena* section of the Patient Information Leaflet.



4. Establishing a healthy treatment routine

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Why is it important to receive your medicine?

Antipsychotic medicines don't cure schizophrenia, but they may be effective in reducing and controlling your symptoms. They may help you to feel more stable and able to get on with your life.

It is important that you continue to take your medicine as prescribed by your doctor, even if you start to feel better. Continuous medicine may help to prevent relapses.

Tips to help you manage your monthly injection



Add your appointment to your mobile phone or diary as soon as you have arranged it.



If a friend or family member usually drives you, make sure you let them know as soon as you add the appointment to your diary.



Ask a member of your treatment team to remind you of your next appointment a few days before your next injection.



Place a reminder somewhere that you will see it regularly e.g. on your refrigerator door.

5. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle^{1,3}

Many people with schizophrenia live happy and fulfilling lives, even if they continue to experience symptoms. Managing schizophrenia is about more than just taking your medicine. Your general health and wellbeing is important and can have an affect on your mental health.

Exercise^{4,5}

There are many reasons why physical activity is good for your body – having a healthy heart and improving your joints and bones are just two, but physical activity is also beneficial for your mental health and wellbeing. Regular exercise can help you to feel better and also help reduce stress and enable you to establish a daily routine. It doesn't just mean going to the gym, there are lots of ways to get exercise such as going for a walk, swimming or playing a sport that you enjoy. Speak to your doctor or nurse for help in choosing an exercise regimen that's suitable for you.

Diet⁶

It is important to eat a balanced diet to maintain a good level of general health, but food can also have a long-lasting effect on your mental health. Your brain needs a mix of nutrients to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

A healthy balanced diet includes:



Different types
of fruit and
vegetables



Oily fish



Wholegrain
cereals or bread,
nuts and seeds



Plenty of water



Dairy products

Try to eat at least three meals each day and drink plenty of water. Try to limit how many high-caffeine or sugary drinks you have, and avoid too much alcohol. Speak to your doctor or nurse for help in choosing a diet that is right for you.



Here are some other useful tips to help manage your condition:



- **Try to cut down on stress**
 - Too much stress may make your symptoms worse and increase your chance of relapse
 - If you feel you are experiencing too much stress, it may help to explore the patient support services in your area
- **Do things you enjoy**
 - Taking part in activities that you enjoy may boost self-esteem and confidence and help you stay well
- **Maintain relationships**
 - Feeling connected to people may help you to feel more valued and regain confidence to face difficult situations
- **Use peer support**
 - Peer support brings people together who have experienced similar things and some people find sharing their experiences helpful
- **Look out for warning signs of you becoming unwell**
 - These may include feeling anxious, sleeping less well, feeling suspicious, hearing quiet voices and avoiding others
- **Plan for difficult times**
 - When you are unwell, it may be more difficult to tell people what you want
 - You may find it helpful to talk to someone you trust about how you would like to be helped in these situations



References: 1. Mind, Understanding schizophrenia. Available at <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/schizophrenia/#.W4lZw5NKiu4> (Last accessed July 2021). 2. <https://www.medicines.ie/medicines/abilify-maintena-suspension-for-injection-400mg-300mg-not-marketed--34483/patient-info>. 3. Paluska, S.A. and Schwnek, T.L. *Sports Med.* 2000;29(3):167–180. 4. Mental Health Ireland, Exercise. Available at www.mentalhealthireland.ie/a-to-z/exercise (Last accessed July 2021). 5. Get active, feel good! Available at <https://www.mind.org.uk/about-us/our-policy-work/sport-physical-activity-and-mental-health/get-active-feel-good/> (Last accessed July 2021). 6. Food and Mood. Available at <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/food-and-mood/about-food-and-mood/> (Last accessed July 2021). 7. Taylor DM, Barnes TRE, Young AH, TheMaudsley Prescribing Guidelines in Psychiatry, 14th Edition, June 2021.

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