

FOCUS

on the Facts

INFORMATION FOR YOUTH ABOUT PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS ARE...

- Serious medications that can affect a person's mind, emotions, and behaviour.
- Prescribed to help you to feel better and to be able to do the things you enjoy.

FACT: Some medications can affect your appetite and weight. Some antipsychotics can cause your appetite to increase, while some stimulants can reduce your appetite.

FACT: Your body can get used to some medications. This can lead to reactions, especially if stopped suddenly.

PEOPLE TAKE THEM TO...

Treat **illnesses** such as depression, bipolar disorder, psychotic disorders, and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Treat **symptoms** such as sleep problems, feeling easily upset, worried, or angry, seeing things that are not real, racing thoughts, difficulty paying attention, and other warning signs of mental health problems.

Decrease troubling symptoms to help people get back to doing the things they enjoy, like having fun with friends, participating in school activities, or working at their job.

FACT: It is your right to have information about your health and medications protected.

FACT: Some, but not all, psychotropic medications are used to slow thinking. This can sometimes cause sleepiness and reduce physical coordination in some people.

TIPS ABOUT PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS:

BE INFORMED. It is important for you to know why you are taking psychotropic medications. You should understand how it is expected to help you, and how it may affect you.

TALK IT OVER. Tell your health practitioner* about all of the medications you are taking and have taken in the past, including herbal medicines, vitamins, over-the-counter medications, alcohol and other drugs. Let her/him know about any allergies you have.

DO YOUR RESEARCH and talk to the people who care about you before making a decision about a treatment or medications. You may even want to take someone you trust with you to your medical appointments.

THESE ARE YOUR MEDS – they are prescribed specifically for you and can be harmful if shared with others.

TRACK YOUR PROGRESS by keeping notes on your symptoms, activities and side effects.

KEEP AN UP-TO-DATE LIST OF YOUR MEDICATIONS and have it with you at all times.

ASK QUESTIONS & TAKE NOTES about your medications. It is your right to know. The best way to get information is to talk to your pharmacist or other health practitioner. Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- What is the name of this medication?
- What is this medication supposed to do?
- How and when should I take it? For how long?
- How much should I take?
- What should I do if I miss a dose?
- Will it interact with other medications I take?
- What are the possible common and serious side effects?
- What should I avoid doing, taking or eating when on these medications?
- Are there other options, besides medications, that may help me?
- If I have more questions, who can I contact?



Facts ABOUT PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS:

Some but not all psychotropic medications take several days or weeks before they are really helpful.

FACT: You can say NO to any medications or treatment. It is important to make an informed decision. See **My Meds, My Rights** for more information about your rights.

FACT: Most side effects get better within a few weeks. But be sure to check this with your health practitioner.

FACT: Your health practitioner needs to know if you are already taking medications of any kind, including non-prescription drugs such as the birth control pill, allergy medications or psychotropic drugs. This is important information to help them find the right medications for you.

FACT: Smoking, caffeine, street drugs, alcohol and even some vitamins can reduce the benefits of some medications and can worsen side effects.

FACT: These medications are supposed to help you get well and stay well. If you have concerns, talk about them with your health practitioner.

SIDE EFFECTS:

Physical and mental changes can happen with all medications. Not everyone gets side effects. It is important to keep track of how you are feeling when taking any medications.

The side effects you may feel will depend on the medications you are taking. Make sure you get information about possible side effects.

Some questions to ask:

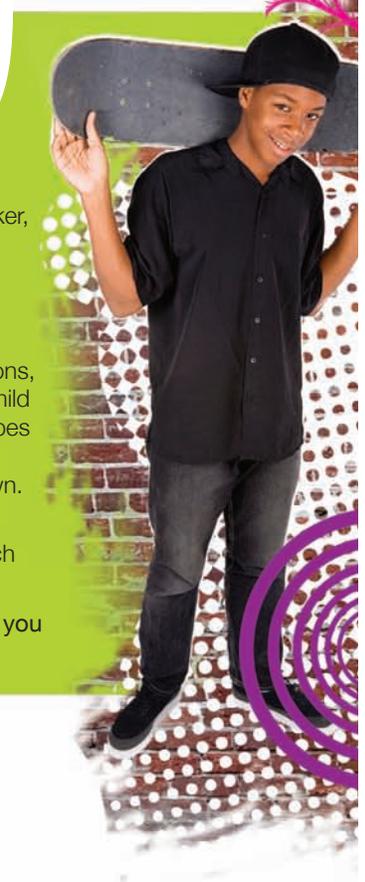
- What are the possible side effects of these medications?
- How serious are the side effects?
- How likely am I to experience side effects?
- How will I know if I am experiencing a possible side effect?
- When are side effects likely to happen?
- What should I do if I experience a side effect?
- Will side effects go away on their own?
- What can I do to avoid side effects?

It is important that your parents, family members, teachers, caregiver, Children's Aid Society (CAS) worker, Probation Officer or foster parents know how you are feeling and if you are having troubling side effects. Sometimes they notice side effects that you may not. Check in with them about how you are feeling.

Symptoms can occur when stopping some medications, especially if you stop suddenly. The reaction can be mild or serious, short or long-lasting, depending on the types of medications you are taking. It's not a good idea to stop taking any psychotropic medications on your own.

Potential side effects that may be common to most psychotropic medications include: headache, stomach aches, sleeping problems and appetite problems.

Talk to your health practitioner about any problems you are having with your medications.



HELPFUL

Resources:

Talk to your health practitioner, your Children's Aid Society (CAS) worker, Probation Officer, or staff in your residential program, or contact one of the many child and youth mental health agencies in the province for support (see www.kidsmentalhealth.ca for organizations near you).

- Kids Help Phone: www.kidshelpphone.ca or 1-800-668-6868
- Psychosis Sucks: www.psychosissucks.ca/epi
- Teens Health: www.kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH): www.camh.net or 1-800-463-6273 (toll free)
- Telehealth Ontario: 1-866-797-0000 (toll free)
- MCYS YouthConnect: www.youthconnect.ca
- The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO has developed a youth-oriented resource with information and tools to help manage your medications. To learn more visit www.onthepoint.ca
- Here to Help: www.heretohelp.bc.ca/publications/factsheets
- Teen Mental Health: www.teenmentalhealth.org
- Mind Your Mind: www.mindyourmind.ca
- **MedsCheck:** Contact your local pharmacy for a medications review.

This document was created by The Provincial Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health at CHEO (the Centre) with financial support from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. For more information, contact the Centre at (613) 737-2297 or visit www.onthepoint.ca.