

Understanding Antipsychotic Medications and the Importance of Metabolic Testing:

A Guide for Parents and Guardians of Children and Adolescents

What Are Antipsychotic Medications?

Second-generation antipsychotics (SGAs), also called atypical antipsychotics, are medications that help treat a variety of mental health conditions in children and adolescents are now commonly prescribed for several behavioral and emotional conditions.

Examples of commonly prescribed antipsychotic medications include:

- Aripipazole (Abilify®)
- Risperdine (Risperdal®)
- Quetapine (Seroquel®)
- Olanzapine (Zyperxa®)
- Lurasidine (Latuda®)
- Paliperdone (Invega®)
- Zipapidine (Geodon®)
- Clozapine (Clozaril®)

Why is Metabolic Testing Important?

Like all medications, antipsychotics have possible side effects. Some of the most important side effects affect the body's metabolism, which is how the body's processes sugar and fat.

Some children may experience:

- Weight gain
- Increased blood sugar
- Increased cholesterol
- Increased triglycerides
- High blood pressure

When several of these changes occur together, they are called metabolic syndrome, which increases the risk of developing type 2 diabetes and heart disease later in life. These changes often happen gradually and may not cause any symptoms at first. Blood tests allow healthcare providers to identify serious health problems. It is important for parents and guardians to keep tracked follow-up appointments for your child's metabolic health.

Why Blood Work If My Child Feels Fine?

Many parents wonder why blood work is necessary when their child seems healthy.

The reason is simple: Metabolic changes cannot usually be seen or felt until they become more serious.

Monitoring these values allows providers to:

- Detect changes early
- Recommend healthy lifestyle changes
- Adjust medications if needed

National quality guidelines recommend obtaining baseline metabolic testing before or shortly after starting an antipsychotic medication and repeating testing about three months later. Ongoing monitoring should continue at least annually, or more often if abnormalities are found. Your child may not eat or drink anything except water in the 10- 12 hours prior to the test. Confirm specific instructions with your prescriber when he/she orders the test.

What If My Child Is Afraid of Blood Draws?

Many children and teenagers are nervous about having blood drawn. This is common.

You can help by:

- Explaining why the blood test is important.
- Scheduling the appointment at a time when your child is well rested.
- Using distraction techniques such as music, videos, or a favorite toy.
- Ask if a butterfly needle is available. It is often used for children and may make the blood draw easier.
- Asking whether a numbing muffle or cold spray is available.
- Praising your child for completing the blood draw.
- Planning a small reward or enjoyable activity afterward.

Although the blood draw only takes a few minutes, the information it provides helps protect your child's health for years to come.

Questions to Ask the Laboratory

- Is there a pediatric phlebotomist available?
- Are numbing cream or cold spray options available?
- Do you use butterfly needles?
- May my child sit with me or hold a favorite stuffed animal during the blood draw?
- Are appointments available at quieter times of the day?
- Are sensory friendly appointments available?
- Approximately how long will the visit take?

Remember

- Antipsychotic medications can be an important part of treating serious mental health conditions and improving a child's quality of life.
- Routine metabolic testing is one of the best ways to make sure treatment remains safe.
- Even when blood draws are difficult, they help identify health concerns early, allowing your child's healthcare team to make informed decisions and reduce the risk of future medical complications.
- Working together, families and healthcare providers can support both your child's mental health and physical well-being.

Web address:

Email:

**YOUR
LOGO HERE**

Produced by:
 **Child & Family**
HEALTH COLLABORATIVE OF OHIO
an affiliate of Ohio Children's Alliance