

Antipsychotics

Antipsychotics are drugs used to treat major diseases like Schizophrenia that usually exhibit paranoia, hallucinations and/or delusions that are not due to some other medication or reversible condition. For several decades, they have also been tried for treating similar behaviors in persons with dementia, personality disorders and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Unfortunately, they are *far* more likely to cause serious side effects or death in these groups than they are to manage the behaviors. Numerous large studies have shown that they are almost always *no more effective than sugar pills* in these conditions, but they can cause diabetes, strokes, falls, fractures, Parkinsons and even death. While providers often 'try' them anyway to see if behaviors improve without side effects, this is seldom 'successful'.

The Federal government has recently stepped in to regulate this practice and has issued many rules about when these drugs and others that are similar can be used, for how long, and at what doses. They simply may **not** be used to sedate persons with distressing behaviors that are not clinically harmful to that person or other non-staff members or when dangerous side effects emerge. Doing so could lead to unacceptable outcomes for the patient and major sanctions against the nursing home.

When these drugs are used for psychotic behaviors placing the patient or others at risk, the facility closely tracks the behaviors with input from staff, providers, family and friends. If or when there are attributable side effects or the psychotic behaviors do not seem to be a continuing issue, the facility and providers are required to taper and/or stop the medication.

If you have questions about any of this information at any time, please do not hesitate to ask the primary care provider or the facility medical director, consulting pharmacist, nurse or social worker. We will all work together to find safe, effective ways to manage abnormal behaviors in our residents without the use of any more drugs than are absolutely necessary.