Aripiprazole belongs to a group of medicines called antipsychotics. It is taken once daily.

Keep your regular appointments with your doctor. This is so your progress can be checked.

The most common side-effects include feeling shaky and restless.

About aripiprazole

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of medicine</th>
<th>An antipsychotic medicine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Used for</td>
<td>Schizophrenia; mania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Also called</td>
<td>Abilify®</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available as</td>
<td>Tablets, melt-in-the-mouth (crodispersible) tablets, oral liquid medicine, and injection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aripiprazole belongs to a group of medicines called antipsychotics. It will have been prescribed for one of two different mood disorders. You may have been prescribed it to relieve the symptoms of schizophrenia. Alternatively, it will have been prescribed for the treatment and/or prevention of high mood swings, a condition called mania. In both of these conditions, aripiprazole works on the balance of chemical substances in your brain.

Maintenance doses of aripiprazole can also be given to people with schizophrenia by depot injection. There is a separate medicine leaflet providing more information about this, called Aripiprazole long-acting injection.

Before taking aripiprazole

Some medicines are not suitable for people with certain conditions, and sometimes a medicine may only be used if extra care is taken. For these reasons, before you start taking aripiprazole it is important that your doctor knows:

- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding.
- If you have a heart condition or blood vessel disease.
- If you have had a stroke, or if you have been told you have 'narrowing' of the blood vessels to your brain.
- If you have liver, kidney, or prostate problems.
- If you have any problems with your breathing.
- If you have any of the following: epilepsy, depression, Parkinson’s disease, raised pressure in your eye (glaucoma) or a condition which causes muscle weakness, called myasthenia gravis.
- If you have ever had yellowing of your skin or of the whites of your eyes (jaundice) or a blood disorder.
- If you have a tumour on your adrenal gland (a condition called phaeochromocytoma).
- If you have had an allergic reaction to a medicine.
- If you are taking or using any other medicines. This includes any medicines you are taking which are available to buy without a prescription, as well as herbal and complementary medicines.
How to take aripiprazole

- Before you start the treatment, read the manufacturer’s printed information leaflet from inside the pack. It will give you more information about aripiprazole and it will also provide you with a full list of the side-effects which you may experience from taking it.
- The recommended dose for adults is 15 mg once daily. Your dose, however, may be adjusted to suit your condition, so take aripiprazole exactly as your doctor tells you to. The directions for taking your doses will be printed on the label of the pack to remind you about what the doctor said to you.
- You can take aripiprazole either before or after meals.
- Try to get into the habit of taking your doses at the same time of day each day, as this will help you to remember to take it. If you do forget to take a dose, take it as soon as you remember. If you do not remember until the following day, skip the missed dose. Do not take two doses at the same time to make up for a forgotten dose.
- Aripiprazole tablets should generally be taken swallowed whole with a drink of water. However, if you have been given Abilify® orodispersible tablets (these are tablets which dissolve in your mouth), peel open the packaging, remove the tablet from the blister and place it on your tongue to dissolve. Alternatively if you prefer, you can take the orodispersible tablet stirred into a small glassful of water.
- If you have been given Abilify® oral solution liquid medicine, you must take this undiluted. Measure your dose out carefully using the cup or dropper supplied in the pack. If you are in any way unsure about measuring out your dose, you can ask your local pharmacist to show you what to do.

Getting the most from your treatment

- Your treatment will require careful monitoring to make sure that you get the best possible benefit from aripiprazole. Keep your regular doctor’s appointments so that your progress can be checked. You will need to have some tests from time to time.
- Treatment with aripiprazole is usually long-term unless you experience an adverse effect. Keep taking it unless your doctor tells you otherwise. Stopping aripiprazole suddenly can cause problems so your doctor may want you to reduce your dose gradually if this becomes necessary.
- If you drink alcohol, ask your doctor for advice. Alcohol increases the risk of side-effects, so it is generally best avoided.
- If you have diabetes you may need to check your blood glucose more frequently, as aripiprazole may affect the levels of sugar in your blood. Your doctor will advise you about this.
- Some medicines similar to aripiprazole can cause the skin to become more sensitive to sunlight than normal. It may be advisable to use a sunscreen in bright sunlight until you know how your skin reacts.
- If you are having an operation, tell the person carrying out the treatment which medicines you are taking. This is important because aripiprazole may interfere with any anaesthetic you receive.
- If you buy or take any ‘over-the-counter’ medicines, check with a pharmacist that they are suitable for you to take with aripiprazole.
- A small number of people taking medicines for mood disorders can have thoughts about harming themselves or ending their lives. It is very important that you tell your doctor about this if it happens to you.
- Treatment with medicines like aripiprazole can sometimes cause problems with impulsive types of behaviour. If you notice any changes in your behaviour, such as an increased desire to gamble, you must let your doctor know as soon as possible.

Can aripiprazole cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects although not everyone experiences them. The table below contains some of the most common ones associated with aripiprazole. You will find a full list in the manufacturer’s information leaflet supplied with your medicine. The unwanted effects often improve as your body adjusts to the new medicine, but speak with your doctor or pharmacist if any of the following continue or become troublesome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common aripiprazole side-effects (these affect less than 1 in 10 people)</th>
<th>What can I do if I experience this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling shaky or restless, unusual or uncontrollable movements</td>
<td>Speak with your doctor. You may be able to take another medicine to reduce these effects, or your treatment may need adjusting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling sick (nausea) or being sick (vomiting), indigestion</td>
<td>SICK TO SIMPLE MEALS - AVOID RICH OR SPICY FOODS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling dizzy, tired or sleepy, blurred vision</td>
<td>IF THIS HAPPENS, DO NOT DRIVE AND DO NOT USE TOOLS OR MACHINES. DO NOT DRINK ALCOHOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Headache</td>
<td>DRINK PLENTY OF WATER AND ASK YOUR PHARMACIST TO RECOMMEND A SUITABLE PAINKILLER. IF THE HEADACHES CONTINUE, LET YOUR DOCTOR KNOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation</td>
<td>DRINK PLENTY OF WATER AND EAT A WELL-BALANCED DIET</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling anxious, difficulties sleeping, increased amounts of saliva</td>
<td>DISCUSS THESE WITH YOUR DOCTOR IF ANY BECOME TROUBLESOME</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Important: if you experience symptoms such as muscle stiffness, a very high temperature, feeling confused, a fast heartbeat and sweating, you should contact your doctor immediately. These can be signs of a rare but serious condition known as neuroleptic malignant syndrome.

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the medicine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist for further advice.

How to store aripiprazole

- Keep all medicines out of the reach and sight of children.
- Store in a cool, dry place, away from direct heat and light.
- Check the expiry date on the bottle. Do not use any medicine that has passed its expiry date.

Important information about all medicines

Never take more than the prescribed dose. If you suspect that you or someone else might have taken an overdose of this medicine, go to the accident and emergency department of your local hospital. Take the container with you, even if it is empty.

This medicine is for you. Never give it to other people even if their condition appears to be the same as yours.

Do not keep out-of-date or unwanted medicines. Take them to your local pharmacy which will dispose of them for you.

If you have any questions about this medicine ask your pharmacist.

Further reading & references

- Manufacturer's PIL, Abilify® 1 mg/1 ml Oral Solution; Otsuka Pharmaceuticals (UK) Ltd. The electronic medicines Compendium. Dated April 2018.

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