Depot Medication

What is antipsychotic medication?
If you have a mental illness and, for example, hear voices other people do not hear, or have difficulty controlling your thoughts, and your doctor has told you that you have an illness called 'schizophrenia' or 'manic depression', then you might need to take anti-psychotic medication.

What is depot medication?
Sometimes people take medicine as pill/tablets (for example headache pills), sometimes as a liquid, (for example cough mixture). Depot is a special way of taking medicine as an injection which releases the drug slowly over several weeks.

So what is depot antipsychotic medication?
This is when your medicine for schizophrenia or other mental illness is given to you by injection, usually into your buttock, by a nurse or doctor. This injection uses the same type of medicine that some people take as pills.

What happens when the nurse or doctor gives the depot injection?
• You will go into a private, comfortable room. Usually there will be no one else in the room except yourself and a nurse.
• First you will be given a small amount of the medicine by injection to check that it does not have any bad effects on you.
• If the medicine is OK for you then, after a few days, you will start having regular injections.
• After each injection the medicine stays in your body for a few weeks.

Where can you have the injections done?
You can usually decide yourself where to have the injections. The possible choices might be:
− at your local doctor's surgery (your GP)
− at a community mental health centre
− at a special out-patient clinic
− at your home, when a nurse visits you.

What's so good about having depot injections?
You only have to have the medicine once a week or even once a month. (Pills have to be taken every day)

As you will have an appointment to go to your doctor or clinic to have the injection, you will probably remember more easily when you have to have the medicine. If you missed your appointment, the doctor or nurse would remind you. (When you take pills you have to remember how many to take and when to take them).

If you have an illness, such as schizophrenia or manic depression, depot antipsychotic medicine will help reduce unpleasant experiences such as hearing voices, and it may help you to think more clearly.

What's bad about having depot injections?
Sometimes this kind of medicine can give you other difficulties, called "side-effects". Not everyone gets side-effects.
Examples of side-effects are:
- you may get some pain when the needle goes into your skin, especially for a few days after each injection;
- you may feel restless and find it difficult to feel calm or settled;
- you may feel dizzy when you stand up; – you may put on weight;
- your eyes may be a bit blurry;
- you may feel some stiffness in your arms, legs, neck or mouth.

After several years of taking antipsychotic medicine, you may start to have twitches around your mouth (called "tardive dyskinesia").

Can anything help with these side effects?
Yes. Often, having smaller amounts of the depot injection can help. Sometimes taking other medicine as well can help.

What should you do if you get any of these side-effects after a depot injection?
Tell your doctor, nurse or key worker. They will want to help with any problems you have with this medicine.

How often do you have to have these injections?
Between once a week and once a month.

How long do the injections go on?
This will depend on your particular problems and experiences. Your doctor will regularly consider whether you should continue the injections.

Can you say 'no' to having these injections?
If you are a voluntary patient you can say no. Medicines can only be given to you if you agree.

But, if you are kept in hospital under a section of the Mental Health Act, the doctors can give you medicine for the first 3 months you are in hospital (even if you say you don't want it).

After 3 months, if you say you do not want the injections, the hospital has to ask a different doctor from a different hospital to see you and to decide if you need the medicine or not.

What happens if you miss an injection?
Depot injections should be given regularly. If you miss your appointment, you should have another injection as soon as you can. If you do not, at first, you will probably feel the same.

Over the next few weeks and months the medicine will stop working and some of your old problems will come back, like hearing voices or feeling troubled or scared.

You may start to feel worse than before you started the medicine if you keep missing the depot injections.

What if you are not happy about the injections?
Talk to your doctor or nurse or key worker about the feelings you have about this medicine. They might be able to help you feel OK about it, or find another way for you
to take it (for example pills).

If you have any questions about depot antipsychotic medicine or if you do not understand anything you have read here please ask your doctor, nurse or key worker. They want to help.

**Warnings**

− Depot injections may make you feel a bit sleepy. If you do feel drowsy or sleepy.
− Be careful not to drink much alcohol—it will make you even more sleepy.
− Don’t drive a car or work any machinery if you are not fully awake. If the medication doesn’t affect your concentration, it will not affect your driving.
− Some other medicines, such as sleeping pills or hay fever pills may make you feel more sleepy when you have depot injections.

Examples of the most common types of depot injections are:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRADE NAME</th>
<th>PROPER NAME</th>
<th>DOSE/AMOUNT</th>
<th>HOW OFTEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Modecate</td>
<td>Fluphenazine decanoate</td>
<td>up to 100 milligrams</td>
<td>1 injection every 1 to 6 weeks according to response and severity of condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depixol</td>
<td>Fluphenthixol decanoate</td>
<td>up to 400 milligrams</td>
<td>1 injection every 1 to 6 weeks according to response and severity of condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haldol</td>
<td>Haloperidol decanoate</td>
<td>up to 300 milligrams</td>
<td>1 injection every 1 to 6 weeks according to response and severity of condition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Piportil</td>
<td>Pipothiazine palmitate</td>
<td>up to 200 milligrams</td>
<td>1 injection every 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clopixol</td>
<td>Zuclopenthixol Decanoate</td>
<td>up to 600 milligrams</td>
<td>1 injection every 4 weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risperdal Consta</td>
<td>Risperidone</td>
<td>Up to 50 milligrams</td>
<td>1 injection every 2 weeks</td>
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Information about treatments can change rapidly and the College updates its mental health information leaflets regularly.

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