



# USE OF FIRST-LINE PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS ON ANTIPSYCHOTICS (APP)



There are many treatments available for behavioral health conditions. Knowing where to start can be difficult. It's important to work with your child's doctor to find the right treatment. Community First Health Plans can also help connect you to care.

## PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE

Behavioral health professionals recommend psychosocial care as the first-line of treatment option for children and adolescents diagnosed with conditions such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and disruptive and aggressive behavior. Psychosocial care can include:

- Behavioral interventions
- Psychological therapies
- Skills training
- Other treatments

## ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS

The decision to start antipsychotic medication to treat your child's behavioral health condition should be made with your child's doctor. Together, you should review and carefully consider the possible risks and benefits of medication. Psychosocial care, like therapy, should continue as a part of your child's treatment plan.

If your child is prescribed antipsychotic medication, it's important to give them as prescribed, in the safest and most effective manner for your child. **Medications like Abilify (aripiprazole), Zyprexa**

**(olanzapine), and Risperdal (risperidone), can have potentially serious side effects. According to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), more than 75% of children and adolescents on Medicaid are taking antipsychotic medications in a way that is not FDA approved.**

## TIPS FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN TAKING OR CONSIDERING ANTIPSYCHOTIC MEDICATIONS

- **Find a counselor for your child.** Make sure your child feels safe with and trusts their counselor. If you need help finding a counselor, ask your child's doctor or call Community First Health Plans Member Services. You do not need a referral to see a behavioral health specialist, like a counselor.
- **Teach your child different ways to manage their condition.** Encourage good self-care like getting enough sleep, eating healthy food like fruit and vegetables, and being active. Work with your child on various ways to manage strong feelings, like deep breathing, playing with a pet, or doing something creative they enjoy, like making art or music. Set a good example for your child by working with their counselor or taking parenting classes.
- **Schedule an appointment within 15 days of your child starting a new prescription to monitor for side effects.** Talk to your child's doctor about any side effects that you or your child notice. This is extra important if your child

is taking multiple antipsychotics at once.

- » Watch your child for signs of excessive or new drowsiness, dizziness when moving, blurred vision, rapid heartbeat, sensitivity to the sun, skin rashes, and menstrual problems for girls.
- » Work closely with your doctor to routinely monitor your child's weight, blood sugar level, and lipid level.
- » Be aware that prescribing information for all atypical antipsychotics warns against their use in pediatric patients with a history of seizure disorders. This is because these medications may lower your child's seizure threshold.

- **Get regular lab work to monitor side effects.** Your child's doctor will likely recommend regular lab work to establish a baseline and review metabolic indicators to ensure appropriate management of side effects. It's important to take your child to complete the lab work. Some antipsychotic medications can increase the risk of significant weight gain, metabolic changes, and other possible side effects. You should also discuss the implications for future physical health concerns, including obesity and diabetes.

## WHEN TO GET HELP RIGHT AWAY

If your child is talking about suicide, self-harm, violence against others, or experiencing a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help immediately.

- **Call the National Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 988.**
- **Call the Community First Behavioral Health Emergency Line at 1-877-221-2226.**

Help is available 24 hour a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year at no cost. Consider saving these important numbers in your phone. You can also text 988 or go to [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org) for more information or to connect with a trained professional who can help.

## MORE RESOURCES

- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\) Teen and Young Adult Resource Directory](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\) Mental Health Information](#)
- [Bexar County Behavioral Health Resource Directory Behavioral-Health-Resource-Directory](#)
- [Family Service Mental Wellness and Behavioral Health](#)

### Sources

[CMS Atypical Antipsychotic Medications: Use in Pediatric Patients](#)



Please note that Community First Health Plans does not provide financial incentives (rewards) to physicians or employees (who conduct utilization reviews) for issuing denials of coverage, that result in underutilization, or creating barriers to care or service.