

Common terms and Medications

Aphasia, expressive

Loss of language ability with difficulty finding words and naming objects.

Aphasia, receptive

Loss of language ability where there is great difficulty grasping complex concepts.

Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease

Transmissible degenerative dementia with rapid onset affecting the cerebral cortex through cell destruction and overgrowth.

Delirium

An acute disturbance in consciousness that involves problems with attention, perception, thinking, memory, psychomotor behavior, and sleep-wake cycle.

Dementia

Impairment in short- and long-term memory due to varied etiologies, including vascular disease, HIV, head trauma, Parkinson's disease, substance abuse, among others. Dementia is considered a cognitive disorder in the DSM-IV-TR.

Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type (DAT) or Alzheimer's Dementia (AD)

A chronic progressive disorder that is the major cause of degenerative dementia in North America. With the progression of the condition there is often memory and judgment loss, loss of interest, and carelessness. The cause of the disease is unknown and there is no cure. Definitive diagnosis is currently based on changes in the brain plaques and neurofibrillary tangles on autopsy.

Huntington's disease

A progressive, degenerative genetic disorder characterized by both motor and cognitive changes. This is a frequently observed type of hereditary nervous system diseases.

Parkinson's disease

A cognitive disorder occasionally associated with Dementia of the Alzheimer's Type. Several types of Parkinson's disease exist and the cause is unknown.

Pick's disease

A rare disorder in which cerebral atrophy is present in the frontal and/or temporal lobes. The temporal patterns of behavior include talkativeness, lightheartedness, gaiety, anxiety, and hyperattentiveness, while the frontal patterns include inertia, emotional dullness, and lack of initiative.

Pseudodementia

Reversible cognitive impairments seen in depression.

Sundowning

Commonly understood as confused behavior at night when environmental stimulation is low.

Vascular dementia

A dementia that is abrupt in onset, episodic, with multiple remissions. Brain tissue is destroyed by Intermittent emboli.

COMMON MEDICATIONS

Mirtazapine, sold under the brand name **Remeron** among others, is an atypical antidepressant which is used primarily in the treatment of depression. In addition to its antidepressant properties, mirtazapine has anxiolytic, sedative, antiemetic, and appetite stimulant effects and is sometimes used in the treatment of anxiety disorders, insomnia, nausea and vomiting, and to produce weight gain when desirable. It is taken by mouth. Dosage range starts at 7.5mg and goes to 45mg. It always needs to be taken right before bed. Pills may be cut as needed.

Valproate (VPA), also called **Depakote, valproic acid, sodium valproate, and valproate semisodium** are medications primarily used to treat epilepsy and bipolar disorder and to help with impulsivity. Long and short acting formulation of tablets exist. Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, sleepiness, and a dry mouth. Serious side effects can include liver problems and regular monitoring of liver function tests is therefore recommended, you will also be asked to do regular VPA blood levels testing. The starting dosage is usually 125mg and the range can go to 2000mg daily, usually given in divided doses. Pills cannot be cut.

Quetiapine, marketed as **Seroquel** among others, is an atypical antipsychotic used for the treatment of schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depressive disorder. It is also sometimes used as a sleep aid due to its sedating effect. It is also useful to reduce agitation and combativeness. Common side effects include sleepiness, constipation, weight gain, and dry mouth.^[6] Other side effects include low blood pressure with standing,¹In elderly people with dementia its use increases the risk of death and the medication has a class wide black box warning. Quetiapine is believed to work by blocking a number of receptors including serotonin and dopamine receptors. Starting dosage is 12.5mg and ranges can go up to 500mg per day. The pills are fairly small and can be difficult to cut but then can be cut as needed. Should be given at the times set by your provider.

Risperidone, sold under the trade name **Risperdal** among others, is an antipsychotic medication. It is mainly used to treat schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and irritability in people with autism. In low dosages it is very helpful with reductions in agitation, paranoia and aggression. Common side effects include movement problems, sleepiness, trouble seeing, constipation, and increased weight. Serious side effects may include the potentially permanent movement disorder. In older people with psychosis as a result of dementia, it may increase the risk of dying, it has a class wide black box warning. Starting dosage is 0.25mg and total daily dosage can be as high as 10mg per day. Pills can be cut, it is also available in rapid dissolve format which dissolves in the mouth for those who have difficulty swallowing medications. Should be given at the time set by your provider.

Brexpiprazole, sold under the brand name **Rexulti**, is an atypical antipsychotic. It is a dopamine D₂ receptor partial agonist and has been described as a "serotonin–dopamine activity modulator" (SDAM). The drug received FDA approval on July 13, 2015 for the treatment of schizophrenia, and as an adjunctive treatment for depression. It helps anti-depressant medications work quicker and more effectively. IT has very few side effects and is well tolerated. Dosage range is 0.25mg to 4mg daily. The pills cannot be cut.

Venlafaxine, sold under the brand name **Effexor** among others, is an antidepressant of the serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI) class. This means it increases the concentrations of the neurotransmitters serotonin and norepinephrine in the body and the brain. It is used for the treatment of major depressive disorder (MDD), generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder and social phobia. Side effects include increased blood pressure however it is well tolerated medication. It is a capsule and cannot be cut, crushed or opened. Starting dosage is 37.5mg and goes up to 300mg per day. If coming off of this medication, you must taper down slowly.

Donepezil, marketed under the trade name **Aricept**, is a medication used in the palliative treatment of Alzheimer's disease. Donepezil is used to improve cognition and behavior of people with Alzheimer's, but does not slow the progression of or cure the disease. Common side effects include loss of appetite, gastrointestinal upset, diarrhea, difficulty sleeping, vomiting, or muscle cramping. Aricept is thought to delay the progression in Alzheimer's type dementia but is not curative. This medication can be activating for patients and cause agitation for some patients. The benefits and risks should be discussed with your provider. Dosage range is 5mg to 23mg daily in divided dosages. Medication should not be crushed or cut.

Rivastigmine (sold under the trade name **Exelon**) is a parasympathomimetic or cholinergic agent for the treatment of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer's type and dementia due to Parkinson's disease. The drug can be administered orally or via a transdermal patch; the latter form reduces the prevalence of side effects which typically include nausea and vomiting. Exelon is thought to delay the progression in Alzheimer's type dementia but is not curative. This medication can be activating for patients and cause agitation for some patients. The benefits and risks should be discussed with your provider. Medication should not be crushed or cut.

Memantine sold as **Namenda** is used to treat moderate-to-severe Alzheimer's disease, especially for people who are intolerant of or have a contraindication to Aricept or Exelon. It has been associated with a moderate decrease in clinical deterioration with only a small positive effect on cognition, mood, behavior, and the ability to perform daily activities in moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease. There is no evidence that it cures the disease process. There does not appear to be any benefit in mild disease. Dosages are increased in a step wise progression with the goal being to get to 28mg per day. The benefits and risks should be discussed with your provider.

Lithium compounds, also known as **lithium salts, Lithobid and Lithium**, are primarily used as a psychiatric medication. This includes in the treatment of major depressive disorder that does not improve following the use of other antidepressants, and bipolar disorder. In these disorders, it reduces the risk of suicide. It has also shown to be useful for agitation and impulse destructive behaviors. Common side effects include increased urination, shakiness of the hands, and increased thirst. Serious side effects include hypothyroidism, diabetes insipidus, and lithium toxicity. Blood level monitoring is recommended to decrease the risk of potential toxicity. If levels become too high, diarrhea, vomiting, poor coordination, sleepiness, and ringing in the ears may occur. Pills cannot be cut or crushed. Dosage range is 150mg to 300mg three times per day.