



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
**DEPARTMENT OF
MENTAL HEALTH**
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**MESSAGE TO PARENTS
AND CAREGIVERS:
TYPES OF PSYCHOTROPIC
MEDICATIONS USED IN
CHILDREN AND
ADOLESCENTS**



MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS ABOUT MEDICATIONS

Dear Parent/Caregiver,

Your child has been released from our facility, and his/her doctor has given him/her a prescription for important medicines. These medications are an important part of your child's care to help him/her feel better.

Here are some important instructions about using the medication(s) the right way.

- Your child's prescription should be filled as soon as possible so that their medication(s) don't stop working.
- Medication(s) should be taken exactly as instructed and should not be changed or stopped without talking to your child's doctor. Some medications take patience and several weeks for them to work. If the medication(s) does not seem to be working, please first check to see if your child is taking it correctly.
- If the medication(s) does not appear to be working even if it is being taken correctly, please tell your child's doctor so that he/she can try other things.
 - It is possible that the dose and/or instructions may need to be changed.
 - There may be other things happening in school or at home that may be causing the problems to continue.
 - Please share any questions or concerns you might have with your child's doctor.
- It is important that your child gets a physical examination (medical check-up) at least once a year, and sometimes more often. It is also important that your child gets the laboratory tests (like blood tests) done as recommended by the doctor.
- If you believe your child is using drugs (for example, Marijuana, Crystal meth, Cocaine, etc.) or alcohol, please tell your child's doctor immediately, because there could be harmful reactions with the medications.
- If you believe your child is pregnant, please tell your child's doctor immediately, because the medicine might need to be changed.
- Your child may experience some side effects with some medications, so please watch closely and tell your child's doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

A list of commonly used medications has been included with this letter for your information.

TYPES OF MEDICATIONS: MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Medications:

Stimulants: Methylphenidate (Ritalin, Concerta, Focalin, Metadate), Amphetamine (Dexedrine, Adderall, Vyvanse)

- **Purpose:** Treat symptoms of ADHD, such as poor attention span, difficulty concentrating, and hyperactivity.
- **Benefits:** Improved attention span, decreased hyperactivity, and decreased impulsive behaviors.
- **Side Effects:** Decreased appetite, poor sleep, stomach discomfort, drowsiness (rare).

Non-Stimulants: Atomoxetine (Strattera), Guanfacine (Tenex, Intuniv), Clonidine (Kapvay, Catapres)

- **Purpose:** Treat symptoms of ADHD, such as poor attention span, difficulty concentrating, and hyperactivity.
- **Benefits:** Improved attention span, decreased hyperactivity, and decreased impulsive behaviors.
- **Side Effects:** Headache, poor sleep, stomach discomfort (with Atomoxetine), drowsiness (Guanfacine, Clonidine).

Anti-depressant Medications:

Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs) and Atypical Antidepressants: Fluoxetine (Prozac), Sertraline (Zoloft), Citalopram (Celexa), Escitalopram (Lexapro), Bupropion (Wellbutrin), Mirtazipine (Remeron)

- **Purpose:** Treat depression and anxiety.
- **Benefits:** Improved mood, decreased depressive symptoms, and decreased anxiety.
- **Side Effects:** Restlessness, nausea, poor sleep, elevation of mood (rare), increased risk of seizure (Bupropion); increased risk of suicidal ideation in children and adolescents, which should be discussed with your child's doctor.

Tricyclic Antidepressants: Nortriptyline (Pamelor), Amitriptyline, Imipramine, Clomipramine (Anafranil) (This class of medications is rarely used in children and adolescents.)

- **Purpose:** Treat depression and anxiety.
- **Benefits:** Improved mood, decreased depressive symptoms and anxiety.
- **Side Effects:** Dryness of mouth and eyes, blurred vision, constipation, low blood pressure, heart rhythm irregularities, increased risk of seizures.

TYPES OF MEDICATIONS: MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Trazodone (Desyrel)

- **Purpose:** Treat sleep problems.
- **Benefits:** Improved sleep.
- **Side Effects:** Drowsiness, low blood pressure, painful and persistent penile erection (rare; however, if this occurs, inform your child's doctor immediately, as it may require urgent medical attention).

Antipsychotics:

Atypical Antipsychotics (Newer): Risperidone (Risperdal), Aripiprazole (Abilify), Quetiapine (Seroquel), Olanzapine (Zyprexa), Ziprasidone (Geodon)

- **Purpose:** Treat psychotic disorders, with symptoms including delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized thinking; Treat mood disorders such as Bipolar Mood Disorder; Treat other Mood Disorders, with symptoms including mood instability, impulsivity, and aggression.
- **Benefits:** Decreased psychotic symptoms and aggression, improved mood, and impulse control.
- **Side Effects:** Drowsiness, dizziness, restlessness, extrapyramidal side effects (EPS) (symptoms include shakiness, drooling, and stiffness), increased risk of seizure, breast enlargement and discharge of liquid, low white cell counts, weight gain, diabetes mellitus, and other metabolic side effects; Periodic laboratory tests and careful monitoring by a Physician are necessary.

Typical Antipsychotics (Older): Haloperidol (Haldol), Thiothixene (Navane), Fluphenazine (Prolixin), Perphenazine (Trilafon), Stelazine, Thioridazine (Mellaril), Chlorpromazine

- **Purpose:** Treat psychotic disorders with symptoms including delusions, hallucinations, and disorganized thinking.
- **Benefits:** Decreased psychotic symptoms.
- **Side Effects:** Extrapyramidal side-effects (EPS) (symptoms include shakiness, drooling and stiffness), motor restlessness (Akathisia), weight gain, seizures, breast enlargements and discharge, low blood pressure, heart rhythm irregularities, persistent irreversible involuntary movements of face, tongue, hands, and feet (Tardive Dyskinesia).

TYPES OF MEDICATIONS: MESSAGE TO PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Anticholinergic Medications for movement disorders extrapyramidal (EPS) side-effects:

Benzotropine (Cogentin), Diphenhydramine (Benadryl):

- **Purpose:** Prevent and treat extrapyramidal side-effects (EPS) caused by antipsychotic medications. Benadryl is also commonly used for the treatment of sleep problems.
- **Benefits:** Relief from or decreased extrapyramidal side-effects (EPS) caused by antipsychotic medications.
- **Side Effects:** Dry mouth, blurred vision, drowsiness.

Mood Stabilizers: Lithium (Lithium Carbonate, Eskalith)

- **Purpose:** Treat severe Mood Disorders such as Bipolar and other Mood Disorders, which may present with severe mood instability, aggression, and depressive symptoms.
- **Benefits:** Improved mood symptoms and impulse control.
- **Side Effects:** Dry mouth, tremor, stomach discomfort, weight gain, memory problems, thyroid and kidney problems, lithium toxicity; Periodic laboratory tests and careful monitoring by a Physician are necessary.

Anticonvulsant Mood Stabilizers: Valproic Acid (Depakote, Depakene), Carbamazepine (Tegretol), Oxcarbazepine (Trileptal), Topiramate (Topamax), Lamotrigine (Lamictal)

- **Purpose:** Treat Mood Disorders such as Bipolar and other Mood disorders, symptoms may include severe mood instability, aggression, and poor impulse control.
- **Benefits:** Improved mood symptoms and impulse control.
- **Side Effects:** Drowsiness, nausea, serious rashes (Lamotrigine), abnormalities in blood counts (Carbamazepine and Depakote), liver problems (rarely with Carbamazepine and Depakote); Periodic laboratory tests and careful monitoring by a Physician are necessary.

Other (Miscellaneous) Medications: Hydroxyzine (Vistaril):

- **Purpose:** Treat poor sleep and anxiety.
- **Benefits:** Improved sleep and decreased anxiety.
- **Side Effects:** Headaches, dizziness, allergic reaction



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**IN CASE OF ANY QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS
PLEASE CALL
LA COUNTY DMH HELP LINE
1-800-854-7771**

**IN CASE OF ANY EMERGENCY PLEASE CALL
911 OR GO TO THE NEAREST EMERGENCY
ROOM**

