



## Physician Fact Sheet on the Use of Antipsychotic Medications in Persons with Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (MR/DD)

1. Antipsychotic medications may be indicated for specific psychiatric disorders or dangerous behaviors (See **DDMED 39**).
2. All antipsychotics may have significant metabolic, cognitive, and neurological side-effects in the population with MR/DD.
3. Common psychiatric indications for the use of antipsychotics include schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, agitation produced by delirium, and severe, dangerous behaviors (See **DDMED 57** or **DDMED 70**).
4. The use of antipsychotics for severe or dangerous behavioral symptoms should include an attempt to control behaviors with behavioral intervention.
5. Acute, behavioral stabilization with antipsychotics should be followed by behavioral management strategies and slow dose taper to minimum required dosage.
6. Antipsychotic medications require 2-6 months for reduction of psychotic symptoms.
7. Older, antipsychotic medications like haloperidol may have serious side-effects including parkinsonism, dyskinesia, and akathisia in the patient with MR/DD.
8. New second or third generation antipsychotic medications should be used as the first drug of choice and require 2-6 months for reduction of psychotic symptoms.
9. Most second or third generation antipsychotic medications may produce sedation, falls, weight change (loss or gain), and diabetes, termed “metabolic syndromes”.
10. The use of anticholinergic medications to reduce side-effects of old antipsychotics can produce additional confusion in the patient with MR/DD.
11. Akathisia, i.e., an inner sense of restlessness, is a common medication side effect of older antipsychotic medications.
12. Avoid polypharmacy, especially simultaneous prescription of two antipsychotic medications.
13. The prescription of antipsychotic medications requires informed consent from the patient or guardian.