

## When do people usually notice movement problems ?

Extreme muscle stiffness (“dystonia”) usually appears within hours or days of people starting antipsychotic treatment, or having the dose of their medication increased. It is rare for it to occur if you have been on the same medication for some time.

Some problems, like feeling restless and unable to stay still, may start if you have had your **medication changed** recently, or the **dose** increased.

Other problems, like odd movements that you can't control, may only appear after you have been on the same medication for a long time.

## Are movement problems serious?

Movement problems are **not** usually serious, but shaking and stiffness may make it harder to do everyday tasks, like shaving or making a cup of tea.

Feeling restless and unable to relax can make you feel irritable, or cause you to act on impulse. These mood changes may make life difficult for you and other people.



Uncontrollable movements may look odd to others, so you may feel embarrassed about going out in public. You may find it difficult to talk or eat if you have this problem.

## Can anything be done about movement problems?

Yes. There are usually three options that your Doctor will discuss with you.

- 1) You might be prescribed another type of medication to **treat** the problem.
- 2) It might be possible to reduce the **dose** of your medication slightly to see if this makes the problem go away. Sometimes reducing the dose too much may stop the medication working.
- 3) In some cases, you may be advised to **switch** to a different type of antipsychotic drug. Some drugs are less likely to cause movement problems than others, but they may have other side effects that your Doctor will tell you about.



The best option for you is likely to depend on a number of things that you will need to talk to your Doctor about. These include:

- ◆ How well you feel on your medication.
- ◆ How long you have been taking it.
- ◆ What types of medication you have tried in the past.
- ◆ Your age, health and medical history.
- ◆ How much the problem is affecting you.

# Movement Problems & Antipsychotic Medication



**This leaflet explains the movement problems that you may get if you take antipsychotic medication.**

**It should help you to recognise and report any side effects that you might have.**

## Movement problems and antipsychotic medication

Some people find that they feel as if they need to be “on the go” all the time when they take antipsychotic medication.

Others may find that they feel stiff, or that they start to move in strange ways that they cannot control.

This leaflet explains the type of movement problems that some people get when they take antipsychotic medication. It is designed to help you to **spot** these problems and **report** them to your Doctor, CPN or Care Co-ordinator.



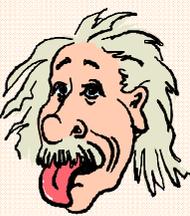
### What should I do if I think I have a movement problem?

It is very important that you **do not stop taking your medication**. This could cause you to become unwell and it could make the problem worse.



Tell your Care Co-ordinator, CPN or Doctor about the problem. They will need to know when you first noticed the problem and how it affects you.

**Turn to the back of this leaflet to find out what can be done about movement problems.**

Problem	What does it feel like?
<p><b>Shaking, or slow movements (“parkinsonism”)</b></p> 	<p>If you have this problem, you may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ feel shaky,</li> <li>◆ feel stiff,</li> <li>◆ find you move more slowly,</li> <li>◆ show less sign of emotion on your face,</li> <li>◆ have more dribble or spit in your mouth,</li> <li>◆ feel as if your mind is working more slowly.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Restlessness (“akathisia”)</b></p> 	<p>You may feel restless and uncomfortable, both mentally and physically. Relaxing is difficult, so you may feel irritable or act impulsively. You may feel unable to sit still, so you may find yourself:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ crossing and uncrossing your legs,</li> <li>◆ rocking from foot to foot,</li> <li>◆ pacing up and down to keep on the go.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Uncontrollable movements (“tardive dyskinesia”)</b></p> 	<p>You may develop odd movements. You may not notice them, but they can look strange to others. Examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Smacking your lips together.</li> <li>◆ Chewing when there’s nothing in your mouth.</li> <li>◆ Sticking your tongue out.</li> <li>◆ Moving your fingers and hands so that it looks as if you’re rolling something between your finger tips or playing the piano.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Extreme muscle stiffness (“dystonia”)</b></p> 	<p>Your muscles may go into spasm, or become very tight and feel as if they are out of your control. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Eyes rolling upwards.</li> <li>◆ Head and neck twisting to one side.</li> <li>◆ Difficulty speaking clearly or swallowing.</li> <li>◆ Feeling as if you are having a fit.</li> <li>◆ Finding it hard to breathe.</li> </ul>