

Aripiprazole

Abilify, Abilify Maintena, Abilify Asimtufii, Aristada, Abilify MyCite, an antipsychotic medicine

This medicine steadies the brain signals behind psychosis and mood swings, and it is one of the lighter ones on weight.

WHAT IT TREATS

Psychosis, bipolar, depression

HOW YOU TAKE IT

Once daily, food optional

WHEN IT WORKS

1 to 2 weeks; more by 6

HABIT FORMING

No

⚠️ IMPORTANT SAFETY WARNING

Older adults with dementia have a higher chance of dying while on this medicine, so it is not used for dementia. In people under 25 it can bring on thoughts of suicide, most often in the first weeks. Call **988** or your prescriber if that starts.

📌 WHAT THIS MEDICINE DOES

- **Aripiprazole** steadies dopamine, a brain signal that runs too high in psychosis and mania and too low in some depression.
- It can quiet voices, ease suspicious thinking, level out mania, and it is often added to an antidepressant that is not enough alone.
- It is not a sedative and it is not habit forming. It is meant to give you back your own thinking, not to blunt you.
- It does not change who you are. If you feel flattened or foggy on it, that is a reason to call, not a reason to accept it.

🕒 HOW TO TAKE IT

- Take it **once a day**, at whatever time you will actually remember, with or without food. Morning works for most people.
- If it upsets your stomach, take it with breakfast or a snack. If it keeps you awake, ask about moving it earlier in the day.
- Miss a dose? Take it when you remember unless your next one is close. Never take two at once to make up for it.
- The dissolving tablet is fragile. Peel back the foil instead of pushing it through, and let it melt on your tongue.
- This medicine stays in your body a long time, so any dose change needs **2 weeks** before you can judge how it went.

📈 WHAT TO EXPECT

- Sleep and agitation usually settle first, within days. Clearer thinking and quieter voices build over **2 to 6 weeks**.
- Working looks like the world getting less loud and less threatening, and being able to follow a conversation again.
- Because it lingers in your body, one late dose rarely undoes progress, but several missed days can bring symptoms back.
- Some people feel worse before better if restlessness shows up early. That is treatable and not a sign the medicine failed.

♥️ COMMON SIDE EFFECTS

- Restlessness is the standout here, in up to **1 in 4** people. It is a cannot-sit-still, need-to-keep-moving feeling.
- That restlessness is a side effect, not your illness getting worse, and it usually eases with a dose change or an add-on medicine.
- Weight gain is smaller than with most medicines in this group, often under **4 pounds**, but it is not zero for everyone.
- Your weight, blood sugar, and cholesterol get checked before you start, around 12 weeks, and yearly, so problems get caught early.
- Protein at breakfast, walking most days, and drinking water instead of soda genuinely blunt the appetite this can bring on.
- Trouble sleeping, headache, and nausea are common in the first two weeks and usually fade without stopping the medicine.

⚠️ CALL YOUR PRESCRIBER OR GET HELP RIGHT AWAY IF

- Call **911** for muscle stiffness with a high fever, confusion, or a pounding heart. That combination is an emergency.
- Report movements of the mouth, tongue, or hands you did not choose. Early treatment matters, so call at the first sign.
- Call **988** if thoughts of ending your life show up, and tell your prescriber the same day.
- Call your prescriber for fainting, a seizure, or new urges to gamble, shop, eat, or have sex that you cannot rein in.

🚫 WHAT TO AVOID

- Go easy on alcohol. It stacks with this medicine for dizziness and poor sleep and can undo the steadiness you are building.
- Skip long drives until you know how it hits you, since dizziness and drowsiness are most likely in the first week or two.
- Tell your prescriber before starting fluoxetine, paroxetine, carbamazepine, or a new antibiotic; they change your level.
- In hot weather, drink water and take breaks in the shade. This medicine makes it harder for your body to shed heat.
- Tell your prescriber if you are pregnant, might become pregnant, or are nursing, so you can weigh the choice together.

🛑 STOPPING IT SAFELY

- Do not stop **aripiprazole** on your own. Symptoms often return weeks later, when it is much harder to get back on track.
- Your prescriber can taper it or switch you to something else. There is almost always another option worth trying first.
- Because it leaves the body slowly, stopping feels deceptively fine at first, which is why people quit and then relapse.
- If cost, side effects, or shots are the real problem, say that plainly. Those are all fixable without going without treatment.

❓ QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Is this treating psychosis, mood, or adding to my antidepressant?
- How will we tell restlessness apart from my anxiety getting worse?
- When do I get my weight, blood sugar, and cholesterol checked?
- Would the long-acting shot be easier for me than daily pills?

Where this information comes from

American Psychiatric Association. (2023). *What is schizophrenia?* <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/schizophrenia/what-is-schizophrenia>

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2023). *Aripiprazole (Abilify)*. <https://www.nami.org/about-mental-illness/treatments/mental-health-medications/types-of-medication/aripiprazole-abilify/>

National Institute of Mental Health. (2024). *Mental health medications*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-health-medications>

National Institute of Mental Health. (2024). *Schizophrenia*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/schizophrenia>

Otsuka America Pharmaceutical, Inc. (2026). *ABILIFY (aripiprazole) [Prescribing information]*. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/>

U.S. Food and Drug Administration. (n.d.). *Drugs@FDA: FDA-approved drugs*. <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf/index.cfm>

U.S. National Library of Medicine. (2025). *Aripiprazole*. MedlinePlus. <https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a603012.html>

NOTE

Sources are listed in APA 7th edition style. This handout is general information about a medicine, not medical advice, and it does not replace the instructions from your own prescriber or pharmacist. Never start, change, or stop a medicine on your own. If you think you are having a serious reaction, call your prescriber; if you cannot breathe, cannot stay awake, or are thinking of harming yourself, call 911 or 988 right away.