

Weight Gain

Up-arrow Scale

Chlorpromazine can have moderate metabolic effects, including weight gain, and subsequently, an increased risk of diabetes and dyslipidemia. This is one of the most common side effects, and an often-cited reason for noncompliance among patients.

Orthostatic Hypotension

Oar Hippo-BP

Orthostatic hypotension occurs when blood pressure falls upon standing. Due to the alpha-adrenergic blockade caused by chlorpromazine, blood vessels are unable to vasoconstrict, a mechanism needed to increase blood pressure. Patients should be advised to stand up slowly, or to sit or lie down, if they feel dizzy upon standing.

Anticholinergic Effects

Ant-tie-cola

Anticholinergic drugs work by blocking acetylcholine, which in turn inhibits parasympathetic nerve activity. The parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for activities such as digestion, pupil constriction, and elimination of wastes. Therefore, suppression or inhibition of this system results in symptoms such as dry mouth, blurred vision, photophobia, urinary retention, constipation, and tachycardia in patients taking chlorpromazine.

QT Prolongation

QT-heart Prolonged

The QT interval on an electrocardiogram (EKG) represents the depolarization and repolarization of the cardiac ventricles. A prolonged QT interval poses a serious risk of cardiac problems, including Torsades de Pointes, which is a serious arrhythmia that can lead to fatal ventricular tachycardia.

Neuroendocrine Effects

Nerve-endocrine glands

Dopamine functions to inhibit prolactin release. Because chlorpromazine functions as a dopamine antagonist, prolactin levels subsequently increase in patients taking antipsychotic medications. Higher levels of circulating prolactin can induce breast growth (gynecomastia) and promote nipple discharge (galactorrhea) in both men and women. Menstrual irregularities are also common among women taking antipsychotics.

Caution in Seizure Patients

Caution-tape Caesar

First-generation antipsychotics (FGAs) can lower the seizure threshold in patients, thus increasing the risk of seizures. Patients with known seizure disorders, such as epilepsy, should be monitored closely for development of seizures. If this does occur, the patient's provider should increase their anti-seizure medication dosage.

Corneal Deposits

Corn-eyes

Long term or high dosages of chlorpromazine may lead to deposits in corneal tissues, as well as the formation of cataracts.