

# Long-Acting Medications as First-Line Treatment in Schizophrenia

Research has proven that using long-acting injections (LAIs) as an early treatment option for patients with schizophrenia results in a substantial reduction of psychotic episodes along with decreased hospitalizations and improved medication adherence. Because of these demonstrated advantages, criteria have been revised to allow for first line use of LAIs, now referred to as the more patient-friendly term of long-acting medications (LAMs). It is no longer recommended to wait to use LAMs until oral medication fails or additional episodes of psychosis occur.

## Why should LAMs be used?

It is well known that early identification of conditions leads to better health outcomes. The same rings true for early treatment. Prescribing LAMs when a patient experiences their first episode of psychosis can help to prevent relapse and limit neurological damage caused by additional episodes. The use of LAMs as a first-line treatment allows for greater success of medication adherence by alleviating stress associated with a daily medication regime for the patient. Preventing psychosis is key to helping patients live healthier, happier lives.

## Which patients can benefit from being prescribed a LAM?

- Those with high emergency department utilization.
- Those facing challenges with living conditions, substance use, or transportation to/from doctor visits or the pharmacy.
- Those who are at risk for medication non-adherence, have a history of non-adherence, or have expressed concerns with taking multiple pills or doses daily.
- Those in transitions of care including discharge from hospitals or residential programs or leaving a correctional institution.
- Those who express interest in using LAMs.

## What do my patients need to know?

- Connect with your patients by actively listening and addressing any fears they may have. Remember to use language like “long-acting medication” instead of “injectables.”
- Develop a treatment plan together through the use of shared decision-making and motivational interviewing strategies to help patients feel more empowered in their own health and recovery.
- Help them understand the benefits of LAMs by providing them with the accompanying patient-facing educational material written with patients and caregivers in mind.
- Provide them with guidelines for where they can get their injections.

Please contact your Provider Relations Representative with questions or for further information.

References: [National Council for Mental Wellbeing Guide to Long-acting Medications](#)