

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (NMS) Information Sheet

Please Read This Information Carefully

Name: _____ Date: _____

Neuroleptic Medication Prescribed: _____

This sheet tells you about a side effect of the above medication. If any of this causes you special concern, please check with your doctor.

What Is Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome (NMS)?

Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome is a rare, idiosyncratic reaction to a neuroleptic medication. Some signs of NMS include:

- High blood pressure
- Sweating
- Fever
- Pallor
- Rapid or irregular heart beat
- Changes in level of consciousness
- Difficult breathing
- Motor abnormalities such as lack of movement or fluctuating tremor
- Muscle rigidity

What Medications Can Cause NMS?¹

Potent neuroleptics (eg, haloperidol, fluphenazine) are more frequently associated with NMS, all antipsychotic agents, typical or atypical, may precipitate the syndrome.

How Often Does NMS Occur?

NMS does not occur very often. The chances of getting NMS are about 5 to 14 in 1000 (0.5% to 1.4%).

How Severe Is NMS?

NMS is dangerous and is severe. In about one out of every four cases, it can cause death. The chances of this are about 0.1% to 0.4% (1 to 4 chances per 1000).

The recognition of and treating early signs is important because NMS can progress quickly over 24 to 72 hours.

- One early sign is high blood pressure after the start of the neuroleptic.
- Another is severe muscle or motor signs even if other medications are taken to help these signs. If NMS occurs, it usually lasts from 5 to 10 days. This may be longer if an injection form of neuroleptic is used.

¹ This information was modified from an article on eMedicine, "Neuroleptic Malignant Syndrome " Author: [Theodore I Benzer, MD, PhD](#) Instructor, Department of Emergency Medicine, Harvard Medical School; Chief of Clinical Operations, Chief of Toxicology, Department of Emergency Medicine, Massachusetts General Hospital

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Do Some People Get NMS More Than Others?

It is still not clear why one person develops NMS while another does not. The following are thought to place a person more at risk. However, none of these can predict if a specific person will get NMS.

- Male
- Under 40 years old
- Exhaustion
- Malnutrition
- Dehydration
- Non-schizophrenic mental illness
- Other neurological diseases
- More potent neuroleptics such as haloperidol (Haldol) and fluphenazine (Prolixin)

Is There A Treatment for NMS?

Should NMS occur, the neuroleptic is stopped. There are also two medications which are very helpful. One is called dantrolene. The other is called bromocriptine. Your doctor can tell you more about this if you wish.

Can Neuroleptics Be Used Again If NMS Occurs?

Research is still unclear on this. Much depends on the mental illness or behavior. Other treatments are usually tried first. If a neuroleptic is still needed, close monitoring of blood pressure, temperature, neurological, and mental status must occur.

What Should I do?

There are two things to do:

- First, carefully consider the benefits of this medication. Think if it has helped or can help you. These medications have helped hundreds of thousands of people live better lives. While NMS is a problem, please consider any problems which may occur if the medication is not taken.
- Second, immediately tell the doctor or nurse if you see any of the unusual signs described. They are there to help.