

Antipsychotic Side-effect Checklist (ASC) - Overview

- Communication with patients about side-effects improves medication adherence.
- The ASC was designed to assess for various side-effects of antipsychotic medication and the subjective distress associated with the side-effects.
- The ASC does not screen for tardive dyskinesia (TD) or acute dystonia.

Clinical Utility

The ASC is a checklist of common problems for which the patient is asked to check only the boxes that apply. The patient can complete the form in the waiting room or at home before seeing the clinician.

The ASC is also designed for clinicians to use as a brief interview for side-effects during a regular treatment session. The ASC is an instrument that focuses only on common or bothersome side-effects. It does not cover uncommon but important side-effects such as acute dystonia, TD, neuroleptic malignant syndrome, urinary retention and seizures.¹

Scoring

A guide to the ASC is on the following two pages. A more extensive training guide for using the ASC program can be accessed via the Journal of Psychiatric Practice website: www.psychiatricpractice.com

Psychometric Properties

- In a multi-center pilot study set up to evaluate the utility of checklists, 86% of patients responding considered the ASC to be useful in communicating their problems to psychiatrists and other members of the healthcare team.²
- 47% of healthcare team respondents reported that the ASC had assisted them in identifying side-effect problems not previously acknowledged.²

1. Weiden P, Miller A, Which side-effects really matter?: Screening for common and distressing side-effects of antipsychotic medications. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, January 2001: 41-47

2. Dott SG, Weiden P, Hopwood P, Awad AG, Hellewell JS, Knesevich J, Kopala L, Miller A, Salzeman C. An innovative approach to clinical communication in schizophrenia: the approaches to schizophrenia communication checklists. *CNS Spectr*. 2001 (4): 333-338.

Guide to the ASC-Clinician Version¹

Extrapyramidal Symptoms (EPS)

- Refers to the movement disorders that occur when there is a disruption of the brain's extrapyramidal system
- Can be caused by antipsychotic agents, both 1st and, to a lesser extent, also by 2nd generation agents
- **Akathisia:** a motor restlessness; inability to resist the urge to move; pacing and inability to sit still are common
- **Drug-induced Parkinsonian symptoms:** tremor and muscle rigidity; also with extreme slowness of movements

Severe Extrapyramidal Symptoms not captured by the ASC-C:

- **Acute Dystonia:** sudden muscular contractions; often produces neck or jaw spasms or cause eyes to roll up
- **Tardive Dyskinesia:** spasmodic involuntary movements; writhing-like movements are common in the face, mouth, tongue and hands. *Assess dyskinesia using the Abnormal Involuntary Movement Scale (AIMS) (available in STABLE Resource Toolkit)*

Item	Problem	Corresponding Side-effect
1	Loss of energy or drive	Akinesia: Also known as “bradykinesia” means slowing down of movements. A person with akinesia may appear listless or lifeless or the face may lose its usual range of expression. Item 1 covers the physical aspects of akinesia.
2	Feeling unmotivated or numb	Akinesia: A person with akinesia commonly complains of “feeling like a zombie” or having a subjective feeling of being “slowed down”. Item 2 covers the internal aspect of akinesia.
3	Daytime sedation or drowsiness	Sedation: Common side-effect of some antipsychotic medications
4	Sleeping too much	Sedation: Common side-effect of some antipsychotic medications
5	Muscles too tense or stiff	Muscle Rigidity: (EPS) Antipsychotics can make a person’s muscles too firm or tense. Muscle rigidity from EPS can cause a person to walk slowly with small steps.
6	Muscles trembling or shaking	Tremor: (EPS) A repeated shaking movement of the person’s muscles; a side-effect of antipsychotic medication.

1. Using the ASC Program: A Training Guide. *Journal of Psychiatric Practice*, Jan 2001 64-68

Guide to the ASC-Clinician Version - continued

Item	Problem	Corresponding Side-effect
7	Feeling restless or jittery	Akathisia (EPS): Refers to a kind of restlessness or inability to sit still. People often describe akathisia as feeling like they want to “jump out of their skin”. Item 7 refers to the subjective feeling of akathisia.
8	Need to move around and pace	Akathisia (EPS): Can cause people to pace repeatedly, get up and down from a chair or have fidgety leg movements. Item 8 covers the physical restlessness of akathisia.
9	Trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep	Insomnia: Although sedation is more frequent, sometimes psychiatric medications can cause insomnia.
10	Blurry vision	Anticholinergic side-effect: Associated with some antipsychotics and antidepressants. Some medications used to treat the side-effects of antipsychotics (e.g., muscle stiffness) also have anticholinergic effects.
11	Dry mouth	Anticholinergic side-effect: Associated with some antipsychotics and antidepressants. Some medications used to treat the side-effects of antipsychotics (such as muscle stiffness) also have anticholinergic effects.
12	Drooling	Excessive salivation: Often worse at night: associated with the antipsychotic clozapine
13	Memory and concentration	Benzodiazepine side-effect: Associated with some medications used to address anxiety
14	Constipation	Anticholinergic side-effect: Associated with some antipsychotics and antidepressants: can slow down bowel movements
15	Weight changes	Weight gain: Most antipsychotics cause some degree of weight gain, some more than others. Weight gain is a significant concern for patients who are overweight prior to treatment or have a weight-related problem such as hyperglycemia or hyperlipidemia.
16	Change in sexual function	Sexual difficulty: Sexual side-effects are common with antipsychotic medication. Difficulties include problems with erection in and ejaculation in males and lubrication and orgasm in women. Antipsychotic medications can also lead to loss of normal sex drive for both sexes.
17	Menstrual or breast problems	Amenorrhea: Some antipsychotics can cause missed or irregular menstrual periods. Galactorrhea: Some antipsychotics can elevate the hormone prolactin and cause abnormal breast milk leakage.

Antipsychotic Side-effects Checklist (ASC)

Problem	Report
<p>1. Loss of energy and drive: Have you had trouble moving, getting going, or starting things? You may feel generally slowed down.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>2. Feeling unmotivated or numb: Have you had trouble getting motivated or wanting to do the things you used to? Sometimes people describe this as “feeling like a zombie”.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>3. Daytime sedation or drowsiness: Are you tired or sleepy during the day? The tiredness could be a feeling you get throughout the day or only at certain times.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>4. Sleeping too much: Do you sleep too much? Do you feel you sleep for too long? Do you have a problem getting out of bed in the morning, or do you need to go back to sleep for a large part of the day?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>5. Muscles being too tense or stiff: Do your muscles feel stiff or rigid? Sometimes people describe this as cramps or muscle pains in the arms, legs, or neck. Have you had this problem?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>6. Muscles trembling or shaking: Have you had any shaking or muscle-trembling?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>7. Feeling restless or jittery: Have you had any feelings of restlessness? There is an internal restlessness; people describe this experience as “feeling like I’ll jump out of my skin”. Have you had this problem?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>8. Need to move around and pace; inability to sit still: Do you have to get up and pace around? Do you have trouble sitting still? Do you rock from one leg to another?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>9. Trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep (insomnia): Do you have trouble falling asleep or getting to sleep when you want to? Do you wake up during the night, or wake up too early in the morning?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>

Antipsychotic Side-effects Checklist (ASC) - continued

Problem	Report
<p>10. Blurry vision: Do you have blurry vision? Things may seem out of focus. People with blurry vision might have trouble with reading printed words in newspapers.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>11. Dry mouth: Is your mouth too dry? Does it feel like you have cotton in your mouth? Does it seem like your tongue sticks to your mouth?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>12. Drooling: Do you have too much saliva? Some people have problems with drooling or may find that when they wake up their pillow is wet from saliva (spit).</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>13. Memory and concentration: Do you have any memory problems? Are you more forgetful? Is it hard to concentrate? Do you find it hard to follow a conversation or program on TV?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>14. Constipation: Do you have problems with constipation?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>15. Weight changes: Have you had any changes in weight? Do you feel that you are overweight? Do you gain weight quickly, or cannot seem to go on a diet? Are your clothes getting too big or too small for you?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>16. Changes in sexual functioning: Do you have any sexual problems or difficulties? Sometimes people say they have problems with low sex drive. Some men say that they have difficulty with erections or ejaculation, and some women say they have difficulty achieving orgasm.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>
<p>17. Menstrual or breast problems: If you should have regular menstrual periods, have you had any menstrual problems lately? Sometimes women stop having their normal period, or have irregular periods. Have you had this problem recently? Sometimes there may be milk leakage from the breasts.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No Not a problem <input type="checkbox"/> Yes This is a problem Comments _____</p>