



WHAT IS AKATHISIA?

Akathisia is a medication-induced disorder that can cause such intense inner restlessness that the sufferer is driven to self-harm, violence, and/or suicide. Medications that can induce akathisia include (but are not limited to) drugs prescribed for:

Acne	Depression	Asthma
Nausea	Anxiety	Malaria
Insomnia	Smoking Cessation	High Blood Pressure

Akathisia can occur when stopping, starting, or changing the dosage or type of certain medications.

The four types of akathisia listed below all share the same symptoms but differ in their onset:

- Acute Akathisia—develops shortly after starting medication
- Tardive Akathisia—develops a few months or years after starting medication
- Withdrawal Akathisia—develops after reducing or stopping medication
- Chronic Akathisia—any akathisia that lasts more than six months

Being aware of the causes and symptoms of akathisia can help ensure prompt identification and appropriate treatment. If you or a loved one is taking medication for any reason, and new symptoms or worsening symptoms emerge, they could be signs of akathisia.

Subjective components of akathisia (inner symptoms) can include:

- Anxiety and/or panic attacks
- Cognitive confusion and/or delirium
- Insomnia and/or nightmares
- Skin-crawling sensations, intense itching, or tingling
- Agitation and/or impulsivity
- Dysphoria and/or feelings of depersonalization
- Inexplicable inner restlessness
- Unusual, repetitive thoughts and/or behaviors

Objective components of akathisia (outward signs) can include:

- Compulsive movements such as pacing, rocking back and forth, or swinging legs
- Repeated movements of the upper body
- A distracted or distant “deer-in-the-headlights” look
- Change of gait and/or shuffling one’s feet

Akathisia symptoms are often overlooked or mistaken as signs of new or worsening agitation, anxiety, or depression. When misdiagnosed, akathisia may be wrongly treated by raising the dose of the offending medication or adding new drugs. These actions can increase the severity of akathisia and precipitate medication-induced death.

What Can You Do?

MISSD recommends identifying a “medication buddy” to help monitor and report any unusual changes in behavior when starting, stopping, or changing medication type or dosage. Before starting any new medication or making a medication change, consumers should ask about known risks vs. possible benefits and carefully read the patient information leaflet.

Akathisia can cause dangerous out-of-character behaviors. If you or a loved one may be suffering from akathisia, contact a doctor immediately and specifically mention the possibility of akathisia. If the situation is urgent, go to the nearest emergency room or call 911.

About MISSD

MISSD is a unique nonprofit dedicated to honoring the memory of Stewart Dolin and other victims of medication-induced suicide by raising awareness and educating the public about the dangers of akathisia. MISSD aims to ensure that people suffering from akathisia are accurately diagnosed and avoidable deaths are prevented.

MISSD is not anti-drug. We recognize that medications can be lifesaving. MISSD is for truth in disclosure, honesty in reporting, and legitimate drug trials. As an authentic grassroots nonprofit, MISSD accepts no funding from the pharmaceutical industry. MISSD’s educational resources are free and available to anyone.

For more information and a printable akathisia tip sheet, please see:

MISSD.co

Twitter: @MISSDFoundation

YouTube: www.youtube.com/c/MISSDFoundation/featured

Podcast: www.studiocchicago.com/akathisia-stories

Facebook: www.facebook.com/MISSD.co

Sharing lived experiences can increase akathisia awareness and save lives. If you have questions, comments, or an akathisia story to share, please contact us at share@MISSD.co.



DISCLAIMER:

This brochure is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional. MISSD does not offer medical advice or recommendations to individuals. MISSD encourages you to seek the guidance of a healthcare provider if you feel that you, your family, or someone you know may be suffering from the conditions described in this brochure.