

Ten Medications Older Adults Should Avoid or Use with Caution

Because older adults often experience chronic health conditions that require treatment with multiple medications, there is a greater likelihood of experiencing unwanted drug side effects. Older people can also be more sensitive to certain medications. To help you make better informed decisions about your medications, and to lower your chances of overmedication and serious drug reactions, the American Geriatrics Society Foundation for Health in Aging recommends that older people be cautious about using the following types of medications, including some that can be purchased without a prescription (over-the-counter).

- *If you are taking any of these medications, talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.*
- *Do not stop taking any medication without first talking to your healthcare provider.*

Medication

Reasons

USE WITH CAUTION

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs)

Used to reduce pain and inflammation

AVOID long-acting NSAIDs like indomethacin (Indocin) and piroxicam (Feldene).

- Shorter-acting NSAIDs like ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and salsalate (Disalcid) are better choices.
- If you take NSAIDs regularly, and have a history of ulcers or are 75 years of age or older, you may need to protect your stomach against bleeding with a prescription medication such as misoprostol (Cytotec) or a proton pump inhibitor such as omeprazole (Prilosec).
- Because of the increased risk of bleeding, don't use NSAIDs together with aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), dabigatran (Pradaxa), dipyridamole (Persantine), prasugrel (Effient), ticlopidine (Ticlid), or warfarin (Coumadin).

NSAIDs can increase the risk of indigestion, ulcers, and bleeding in your stomach or colon. They can also increase blood pressure, affect your kidneys, and make heart failure worse.

AVOID digoxin (Lanoxin) in doses greater than 0.125 mg.

- Digoxin is used to treat heart failure and irregular heartbeats.

It can be toxic in older adults and people whose kidneys do not work well.

AVOID Certain Diabetes Drugs

- Glyburide (Diabeta, Micronase) and chlorpropamide (Diabinese)

These can cause severe low blood sugar.

Medication

Reasons

AVOID Muscle Relaxants

- Such as cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril), methocarbamol (Robaxin), and carisoprodol (Soma), and similar medications.

They can leave you feeling groggy and confused, increase your risk of falls, and cause constipation, dry mouth, and problems urinating. Plus, there is little evidence that they work well.

AVOID Certain Medications used for Anxiety and/or Insomnia

- Benzodiazepines, such as diazepam (Valium), alprazolam (Xanax), or chlordiazepoxide (Librium)
- Sleeping pills such as zaleplon (Sonata) and zolpidem (Ambien)

They can increase your risk of falls, as well as cause confusion. Because it takes your body a long time to get rid of these drugs, you could feel groggy and sleepy for a long time.

AVOID Certain Anticholinergic Drugs

- Antidepressants amitriptyline (Elavil) and imipramine (Tofranil)
- Anti-Parkinson drug trihexyphenidyl (Artane)
- Irritable bowel syndrome drug dicyclomine (Bentyl)
- Overactive bladder drug oxybutynin (Ditropan)

They can cause confusion, constipation, problems urinating, blurry vision, and low blood pressure. Men with an enlarged prostate should be particularly cautious.

AVOID the Pain Reliever meperidine (Demerol)

It can increase the risk of seizures and can cause confusion.

AVOID Certain Over-the-Counter Products

- AVOID products that contain the antihistamines diphenhydramine (Benadryl) and chlorpheniramine (AllerChlor, Chlor-Trimeton) (particularly in men with an enlarged prostate).
- AVOID over-the-counter sleep products, like Tylenol PM, which contain diphenhydramine.

Although these medications are sold without a prescription, they are not risk free. They can cause confusion, blurred vision, constipation, problems urinating, and dry mouth.

If you are NOT being treated for psychosis, AVOID using Antipsychotics

- Such as haloperidol (Haldol), risperidone (Risperdal), or quetiapine (Seroquel).

They can increase the risk of stroke or even death. They can also cause tremors and other side effects, as well as increase your risk of falls.

AVOID Estrogen pills and patches

- Typically prescribed for hot flashes and other menopause-related symptoms

They can increase your risk of breast cancer, blood clots, and even dementia.

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DISCLAIMER: This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other healthcare provider. Always consult your healthcare provider about your medications, symptoms, and health problems. April 2012

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