

You have probably heard it before: medication use in older patients can be risky business! For example:

- 30 percent of hospital admissions for older adults may be linked to drug-related problems
- For persons age 65 years or older, each year adverse drug events requiring hospitalization is nearly seven times the rate of younger persons
- Adverse drug events have been linked to preventable problems in older patients such as depression, constipation, falls, immobility, confusion and hip fractures

Persons over 65 often have multiple chronic diseases and disabilities that can increase the risk for adverse drug events.

The medication list provided shows some examples of medications commonly recommended to be used cautiously in persons over the age of 65. This list does not include all medications that may have higher risk of adverse drug events to persons over 65. Most of those listed have been on the U.S market for a long time, and alternatives are now available with improved safety and effectiveness.

There are reports of older adults taking these medications without any problems. If you are taking any medications on the list, **DO NOT STOP** taking them! Make an appointment with your health care provider to discuss a possible change to an alternative medication.

***These medication cautions may not apply to all persons in all situations; it is recommended that you speak with your doctor before making any changes to your medications.**

Risk factors

Risk factors for adverse drug events in older adults:

- Having more than five chronic diseases
- Taking more than 11 doses of medications per day
- Taking more than eight medications, including over-the-counter (OTC) preparations, herbal and nutritional products
- Having a recent hospitalization
- Being over 85 years of age

Good Questions for Your Good Health*

Every time you talk with a doctor, nurse, or pharmacist, use the **“Ask Me 3 Questions”** to better understand your health issues:

- 1. What is my main health problem?**
- 2. What do I need to do?**
- 3. Why is it important for me to do this?**

Understanding the answers to these questions can help you take care of your health, prepare for medical tests and take your medicines the correct way. Don't forget to provide an up-to-date medication list to all your health care providers.

*Available online at: www.npsf.org/askme3

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Medications To Be Used with Caution in Older Adults*



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Disease or Condition	Drug Name/Comments
Allergies	Chlorpheniramine (CHLORTRIMETON®), cyproheptadine (PERIACTIN®), dexchlorpheniramine (POLARAMINE®), diphenhydramine (BENADRYL®), hydroxyzine (VISTARIL®), promethazine (PHENERGAN®): can cause sedation, urinary retention or incontinence, constipation, blurred vision, heart arrhythmias, falls, fractures
Anorexia and Malnutrition	Amphetamines - methylphenidate (RITALIN®), dextroamphetamine (DEXEDRINE®): can cause agitation, trouble sleeping, dependence, high blood pressure, chest pain, and heart attacks in susceptible persons
Anxiety	Long-acting benzodiazepines - chlordiazepoxide (LIBRIUM®), clorazepate (TRANXENE®), diazepam (VALIUM®), flurazepam (DALMANE®), quazepam (DORAL®): can cause dependence, depression, sedation, confusion, falls, fractures, breathing difficulties in COPD patients, and urinary incontinence. Meprobamate (MILTOWN®): can be highly sedating and addictive
Depression	Tricyclic Antidepressants - amitriptyline (ELAVIL®), doxepin (SINEQUAN®): can cause sedation, urinary retention or incontinence, constipation, blurred vision, heart arrhythmias, falls, fractures Fluoxetine, daily dosing (PROZAC®): can cause agitation, trouble sleeping, loss of appetite or weight loss
Diabetes	Chlorpropamide (DIABINESE®): can cause prolonged low blood sugars
High Blood Pressure	Clonidine (CATAPRES®): can cause low blood pressure with change in position, hallucinations, falls, fractures Doxazosin (CARDURA®): can cause low blood pressure, dry mouth and urinary incontinence, falls, fractures Ethacrynic acid (EDECIN®): can cause low blood pressure, electrolyte and fluid imbalances, falls, fractures Methyldopa (ALDOMET®): can cause slow heart rate, depression Nifedipine, short-acting (PROCARDIA®): can cause low blood pressure, constipation, falls, fractures
Hormone Deficiency	Thyroid, desiccated (ARMOUR THYROID®): concerns about effects on the heart and possible allergic reactions Estrogens (ESTRADIOL®): may increase risk of breast and endometrial cancer; has not been found to be heart protective
Muscle Spasms	Carisprodol (SOMA®), chlorzoxazone (PARAFLEX®), cyclobenzaprine (FLEXERIL®), metaxalone (SKELAXIN®), methocarbamol (ROBAXIN®): have questionable efficacy at lower doses, can cause sedation, urinary retention or incontinence, constipation, blurred vision, arrhythmias, falls, fractures, confusion, weakness
Heartburn Stomach Pain	Cimetidine (TAGAMET®): can cause confusion, interactions with many medications Belladonna alkaloids (DONNATAL®), clindinium-bromide (LIBRAX®), dicyclomine (BENTYL®), hyoscyamine (LEVSIN®), propantheline (PRO-BANTHINE®): have uncertain effectiveness; can cause sedation, urinary retention or incontinence, constipation, blurred vision, arrhythmias, falls, fractures Metoclopramide (REGLAN®): can worsen the symptoms of Parkinson's disease
Pain Management	Ketorolac (TORADOL®): can cause stomach bleeding Meperidine (DEMEROL®): can cause confusion, dependency and withdrawal leading to falls with fractures NSAIDs, long term use - indomethacin (INDOCIN®), naproxen (ALEVE®), oxaprozin (DAYPRO®), piroxicam (FELDENE®): can cause stomach bleeding, fluid retention, kidney failure, high blood pressure, heart failure Pentazocine (TALWIN®): can cause confusion, hallucinations Propoxyphene (DARVON®): is not more effective than acetaminophen but can lead to drug dependence and accidental overdose
Stroke and Heart Attack Prevention	Dipyridamole (PERSANTINE®): is ineffective for stroke prevention and dementia, risk of low blood pressure with change in position Ticlopidine (TICLID®): is not more effective than aspirin but may cause serious anemias and other blood cell abnormalities
Urinary Tract Infection	Nitrofurantoin (MACROBID®): may be ineffective with kidney disease, can cause lung scarring, liver injury