

# What You Can Do to Help Avoid Bad Effects of Medications

Medications help you prevent and treat symptoms and diseases. Sometimes they can cause health problems as well. The more medications you take, the more likely you are to have a bad effect, such as a fall.

There are steps you can take to avoid such problems:

- Keep an updated medication list with correct names, doses, and time of day that you take them. Include over-the-counter and herbal medications.
- Bring your medication list to every visit with all your doctors and other health care providers. Review it with them, and note changes on the list. It is especially important to do this after you have been seen in the Emergency Department or have been hospitalized.
- When you review your medication list with your doctor or health care provider, ask if there are any medications that can be reduced or stopped. Don't reduce or stop a medication on your own - ask your doctor first.
- When a new medication is added, find out what it is for, how it will help you, and what the risks of taking it are. Ask if there are any common side effects that you should be aware of, and ask if there are any interactions with medications you are already taking.
- If you have symptoms such as fatigue, dizziness, unsteadiness, poor appetite, or confusion, or have had a fall, ask your doctor:

- If these symptoms are due to any of the medications you are taking
  - To check your blood pressure lying AND standing, because a drop in pressure when you stand can be a sign of too much medication
  - Which medications can be decreased or stopped.
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- Ask your health care provider before starting non-prescription or herbal medications, especially ones for sleep, colds, or allergies. There may be interactions with medications that you are already taking, or side effects that you are unaware of.
  
  - Ask your health care provider if there is any treatment, instead of medication, that will help your health problem(s). Examples of non-pharmacological treatment include exercise, massage therapy, and changes in diet and fluid intake.
  
  - Your pharmacist can help identify potential problem interactions or side effects of medications. Use one pharmacy so that they have a complete record of the medications that you are taking.