

Is it time to review your medications?



Medication use is a fine balance



Medications can help us in many different ways. But medications can also cause us harm. That's why it's important to weigh the potential benefits and harms of taking a medication over time.

What is medication overload?



Medication overload means taking more medications than we need. It also means taking too many medications that, together, cause more harm than good.

What are too many medications?



There is no strict number. When we take even one medication that can cause more harm than good at a particular time in our life, one can be too many.

Medication overload causes harm

Medication overload can cause drug interactions and harmful side effects. Harms from medication overload can be very serious. Some examples include:



falls & fractures



hospitalizations



premature loss of independence



confusion & memory problems



car crashes



death

Who is at highest risk?



People who take multiple medications, older adults, and women are at greatest risk of medication harm. The more medications we take, the greater our risk of experiencing harm.

1 in 10

hospital admissions in older adults are the result of a medication side effect¹.

What can you do? Deprescribing may be an option.



Deprescribing means working with your doctor or another health care professional to stop or reduce the dose of a medication that you feel may cause you harm or is not helping you.

Preparing for a medication review with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse

1. **Book an appointment** with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse *specifically* to review your medications.

2. **Questions to ask yourself before your appointment:**

- How are my medications affecting me? Am I having any problems with them?
- If my doctor recommended that I stop taking one or more of my medications, would I be willing?

3. **Prepare your list of questions in advance!**

Here are 5 questions to ask your doctor, pharmacist or nurse when starting a new medication or reviewing one you are already taking:

1. Why am I taking this medication?
2. What are the potential benefits and harms of this medication?
3. Can it affect my memory or cause me to fall?
4. Can I stop or reduce the dose of this medication (i.e. deprescribing)?
5. Who do I follow up with and when?



Remember to write down any other questions you would like to ask about your medications, too.

4. **Bring an up-to-date medication list to your appointment.** Ask your pharmacist for a list of all your medications, or make your own ([visit DeprescribingNetwork.ca for a sample record](https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca)). Include over-the-counter medicines and supplements.



Learn more about deprescribing and medication safety at [DeprescribingNetwork.ca](https://www.deprescribingnetwork.ca)

References

1. Parameswaran Nair, N., Chalmers, L., Connolly, M., et al. (2016). Prediction of Hospitalization due to Adverse Drug Reactions in Elderly Community-Dwelling Patients (The PADR-EC Score). PLoS One, 11(10): e0165757. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0165757>