

What you need to know about deprescribing

Are older Canadians taking too many meds?



2 out of 3 Canadians age 65 and over take at least 5 prescription medications.



1 out of 4 Canadians age 65 and over takes at least 10 prescription medications.

(CIHI, 2018)

What is deprescribing?

When too many medications are taken, deprescribing is a solution. Deprescribing means reducing or stopping medications that may not be beneficial or may be causing harm.

The goal of deprescribing is to maintain or improve quality of life.

Why deprescribe?

Taking medications may be necessary for health, improving symptoms or prolonging life. However:



Things change

As we age, medications affect us differently. Medications that were good then, may not be the best choice now.



Medication may cause harm

The risk of harmful effects and hospitalizations increases when taking multiple medications.



Seniors are more at risk

They are hospitalized five times more often than people under age 65 because of harmful medication effects.

(CIHI, 2013)

Risky meds are good candidates for deprescribing



Medications are considered risky when the harms outweigh the benefits, and safer drug or non-drug therapy can be used to treat the same condition.



Older women are typically more susceptible to harmful effects of medications and more likely to be prescribed risky meds.



Always check with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse before changing or stopping any of your medications.

Ask about deprescribing: make sure your medication really is helping you

What can you do?



Start a conversation with your doctor, pharmacist or nurse. Here are some questions you can ask about your medications:

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?



Inform yourself about your medications and why you are taking them.



Keep a list: ask your pharmacist for a list of all your medications. Keep an updated medication list on you and on your fridge.



Spread the word about deprescribing to friends and family, advocacy groups and government representatives.



Download information on deprescribing: deprescribingnetwork.ca/useful-resources

What is the Canadian Deprescribing Network (CaDeN)?

CaDeN is a group of health care leaders, academic researchers and patient advocates working together to promote safe medication use across Canada.

CaDeN's goals are to:

- **Reduce harm** by raising awareness and decreasing the use of risky prescriptions among seniors.
- **Promote health** by ensuring access to safer drug and non-drug therapies.



Learn more about deprescribing and medication safety on CaDeN's website: deprescribingnetwork.ca

References

- Canadian Institute for Health Information (CIHI). Adverse Drug Reaction–Related Hospitalizations Among Seniors, 2006 to 2011. 2013. Ottawa, ON.
- CIHI. Drug Use Among Seniors in Canada, 2016. 2018. Ottawa, ON.