

Minimizing polypharmacy in older adults

Medications associated with negative health outcomes in elderly patients.¹

Therapeutic class	High risk medications	Common indication	Safer alternatives
Antiemetics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prochlorperazine Promethazine 	Nausea and vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ondansetron tablets and oral solution
Antihistamines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hydroxyzine Meclizine 	Allergies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cetirizine oral solution Desloratadine fluticasone nasal spray* Levocetirizine
		Itching/rash	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cetirizine oral solution Desloratadine Hydrocortisone 1% cream* Levocetirizine Triamcinolone 0.025% cream
		Nausea/vomiting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ondansetron tablets and oral solution
		Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limit treatment to <14 days Doxepin (oral liquid) <6mg/day Ramelteon Trazodone

References:

1. American Geriatrics Society 2023 updated AGS Beers Criteria for potentially inappropriate medication use in older adults. J Am Geriatr Soc. 2023; 71(7): 2052-2081.

*Over-the-counter medication, not covered by plan. Member will have to pay out of pocket.

†Requires prior authorization.

‡Use in combination with a PPI for gastric protection.

Minimizing polypharmacy in older adults

Therapeutic class	High risk medications	Common indication	Safer alternatives
Antimuscarinics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Darifenacin • Fesoterodine • Oxybutynin • Solifenacin • Tolterodine • Trospium 	Overactive bladder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myrbetriq • Gemtesa
Antispasmodics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Atropine (commonly used in combination with diphenoxylate) • Dicyclomine • Hyoscyamine • Methscopolamine • Scopolamine 	GI motility disorders/IBS-D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loperamide (for IBS-D) • Alosetron • Ondansetron tablets and oral solution • Xifaxan (rifaximin)†
		GI motility disorders/IBS-C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lubiprostone • Linzess (linaclotide) • Polyethylene glycol*
		Peptic ulcer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Famotidine • Lansoprazole • Nizatidine • Omeprazole • Pantoprazole • Rabeprazole

*Over-the-counter medication, not covered by plan. Member will have to pay out of pocket.

†Requires prior authorization.

‡Use in combination with a PPI for gastric protection.

Minimizing polypharmacy in older adults

Therapeutic class	High risk medications	Common indication	Safer alternatives
Antiparkinsonian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benztropine (reserve for excessive salivation) • Trihexyphenidyl 	Parkinson's disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amantadine • Carbidopa/levodopa • Carbidopa/levodopa/entacapone • Pramipexole • Rasagiline • Ropinirole • Selegiline
		Drug-induced extrapyramidal symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amantadine and/or reduce the dose of offending agent (e.g., antipsychotic) or switch offending agent to an alternative
Antipsychotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aripiprazole • Asenapine • Chlorpromazine • Clozapine • Fluphenazine • Haloperidol • Caplyta (Lumateperone) • Olanzapine • Perphenazine • Quetiapine • Risperidone • Ziprasidone • Rexulti (Brexpiprazole) • Vraylar (Cariprazine) • Lurasidone • Paliperidone 	Bipolar disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carbamazepine • Divalproex • Lamotrigine • Lithium • Oxcarbazepine
		Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bupropion • Desvenlafaxine ER • Duloxetine • Mirtazapine • Nefazodone • Venlafaxine
		Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buspirone • Duloxetine • Pregabalin • Venlafaxine ER
		Dementia	Avoid use

*Over-the-counter medication, not covered by plan. Member will have to pay out of pocket.

†Requires prior authorization.

‡Use in combination with a PPI for gastric protection.

Minimizing polypharmacy in older adults

Therapeutic class	High risk medications	Common indication	Safer alternatives
Benzodiazepines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alprazolam • Chlordiazepoxide • Clobazam • Clonazepam • Diazepam • Lorazepam • Midazolam • Oxazepam • Temazepam • Triazolam 	Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buspirone • Duloxetine • Pregabalin • Venlafaxine ER
		Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit treatment to < 14 days • Doxepin (oral liquid) < 6mg/day • Melatonin* • Ramelteon • Trazodone
Opioids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buprenorphine Patch • Codeine • Hydrocodone • Hydromorphone • Methadone ## • Morphine • Oxycodone • Tramadol 	Pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celecoxib • Diclofenac[†] • Diclofenac 1% gel • Diclofenac patch • Duloxetine • Etodolac[†] • Gabapentin • Ibuprofen (prescription strength)[†] • Lidocaine patch[†] • Meloxicam[†] • Naproxen (prescription strength)[†] • Pregabalin
Sedatives/ Hypnotics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eszopiclone • Zaleplon • Zolpidem 	Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit treatment to < 14 days • Doxepin (oral liquid) < 6mg/day • Ramelteon • Trazodone

When used for chronic pain.

*Over-the-counter medication, not covered by plan. Member will have to pay out of pocket.

†Requires prior authorization.

‡Use in combination with a PPI for gastric protection.

Minimizing polypharmacy in older adults

Therapeutic class	High risk medications	Common indication	Safer alternatives
Skeletal Muscle Relaxants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cyclobenzaprine • Orphenadrine 	Muscle pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acetaminophen* • Ibuprofen • Naproxen • Tizanidine tablets
Tricyclic Antidepressants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amitriptyline • Clomipramine • Desipramine • Doxepin • Imipramine • Nortriptyline 	Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bupropion • Desvenlafaxine ER • Duloxetine • Nefazodone • Mirtazapine • Venlafaxine
		Headache, migraine prophylaxis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divalproex DR • Propranolol • Topiramate
		Neuropathic pain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duloxetine • Lidocaine patch† • Pregabalin
		Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit treatment to < 14 days • Doxepin (oral liquid) < 6mg/day • Ramelteon • Trazodone

*Over-the-counter medication, not covered by plan. Member will have to pay out of pocket.

†Requires prior authorization.

‡Use in combination with a PPI for gastric protection.