

What you need to know about deprescribing



Are seniors in NL taking too many medications?



4 out of 5 seniors in NL over age 65 take at least 5 prescription medications.



2 out of 5 seniors in NL over age 65 take 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 pharmacist, doctor 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 pharmacist, doctor 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 cause harm if taken for longer than necessary?
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.



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



Make a special appointment with your pharmacist, doctor or nurse to review your medications



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



Download information:
safermedsnl.ca/what-can-you-do



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What is SaferMedsNL?

SaferMedsNL is a public awareness initiative that brings together patient advocates, community organizations, healthcare professionals, academic researchers and government to improve medication use through deprescribing potentially harmful or unnecessary medications.

Visit [SaferMedsNL.ca](https://safermedsnl.ca) to find out more.

More information about deprescribing and medication safety can be found on the Canadian Deprescribing Network'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.