

What Older Adults Need to Know About Rx Risks

Licensed NC Pharmacist



**Denise Hayes,
M.S., R.Ph.**

- 1. PharmAssistUs. Senior Care Concierge Pharmacist Services and the role medication plays in an older adult's overall health**
 1. Providing a value based service for high risk medication and adherence in chronic diseases
 2. How to guidance for using medications safely, reducing risk of medication related health problems and taking a more proactive role in decisions about medications and treatment; with recommendations to share with health caregivers and providers
 3. Developing a cost reduction and error prevention plan
 - 2. Instructor. Brunswick Community College for Pharmacy Technicians**
 - 3. Dispensing Pharmacist. New Hope Clinic**
-
- 4. Owner & Lead Pharmacist, Haworth Apothecary**
 - 5. Pharmacist & Pharmacy Manager, Valley Hospital and Caremark Home Healthcare**

Typical Morning





Good News

1. Live longer
2. Healthy changes have greater impact
3. Even possible to take fewer medications and feel better

False Sense of Security

Just because a med is available doesn't mean it's harmless or the right drug, or dose on the initial assessment; sometimes trial and error

- While many meds are lifesaving or life-improving, sometimes you may experience other issues
- The more you take, the greater the risk of skipping a dose, taking the wrong pill at the wrong time, or taking too much



We've Become A Pill Nation



Taking too many drugs. . . Taking drugs that aren't needed. . . Taking drugs prematurely

- **55%** now regularly take more than 4 prescription meds, plus over the counter, herbal and supplements
- Drug use has increased **85%** in 20 years; outpaces any other country

Non-Prescription Use Increasing



- Over 700 formerly prescription drugs are now available over-the-counter (OTC)
- Of those taking prescription meds, **75%** take at least 1 over-the-counter med, plus vitamins and dietary supplements

\$200 billion / year

A costly strain on household
budgets on unnecessary and
improper use of medication



Reaction Risks Are Real

Risk of Adverse Side Effects



of Meds or Doctors

- If taking more than 4 meds or have multiple doctors involved, the potential for adverse side effects increases exponentially
- 10% of those taking prescription drugs have had an adverse reaction bad enough to go to ER
- 43% of people who take prescription meds have said that providers or pharmacists haven't told them about side effects

Dietary Supplements

Even dietary supplements can cause problems with other medications you take



73%

of those taking prescription
drugs not concerned about
adverse reactions*



Worse for Older Adults

Most over 65 take 5 or more meds; have at least 2 chronic conditions

1. Less likely to ask about side effects or interactions
2. More susceptible to side effects
3. Higher risk of drug interactions



Serious Risks for Seniors



75% more likely to experience an adverse reaction to a medication resulting in a hospital admission . . .

50% of these admissions are avoidable

Estimated to be one of top 5 causes of death and a major cause of

● confusion ● depression ● falls ● disability ● loss of independence



Risks – Some Examples

1. **Combining Drugs**
2. **Abrupt Stops**
3. **Case Examples**

When Drugs Don't Mix



Warfarin
Blood Clotting



Antidepressants like Duloxetine (Cymbalta),
Non-prescription Pain Relievers like Aspirin,
Ibuprofen (Advil), Naproxen (Aleve)

⇒ **Bleeding**

Theophylline
Asthma, COPD,
Respiratory Disease



Cimetidine (stomach ulcers, acid reflux)

⇒ **Seizures**

Lithium
Bipolar Disorder



Loop Diuretics or ACE Inhibitors (high blood
pressure, heart failure)

⇒ **Tremors, Slurred Speech,
Heart Palpitations, Seizures**

Prednisone
Skin Diseases, COPD,
Rheumatoid Arthritis



Pain relievers like Celecoxib (Celebrex),
Ibuprofen (Advil), Naproxen (Aleve)

⇒ **Bleeding stomach ulcers**

ACE Inhibitor
High Blood Pressure,
Heart Failure



Amiloride or Triamterene for BP

⇒ **Deadly potassium levels**

Common Drugs, Often Mixed

Prescription Medications

- High blood pressure – Hydrochlorothiazide or Nadolol
- Sleeping pill – Ambien
- Blood thinner – Warfarin or Coumadin



Over-the-Counter Non-Prescription Medications

- Baby aspirin
- Aleve PM or Aleve
- Dietary Supplements

Side Effects from Combining

Prescription Medications

+

Over-the-Counter
Non-Prescription Medications

• High blood pressure –
Nadolol

+

• Aleve

Lower effect of the BP Med - Nadolol

Side Effects from Combining

Prescription Medications

+

Over-the-Counter
Non-Prescription Medications

- High blood pressure – Hydrochlorothiazide
- Sleeping pill - Ambien

+

- Aleve PM

Nighttime Dizziness

Side Effects from Combining

Prescription Medications

+

Over-the-Counter
Non-Prescription Medications

• Sleeping pill - Ambien

+

• Aleve PM

Next Day Drowsiness

Side Effects from Combining

Prescription Medications



Over-the-Counter
Non-Prescription Medications

• Blood thinner – Coumadin



• Aspirin

• Aleve PM

Bleeding

Side Effects from Combining

Prescription Medications



Over-the-Counter
Non-Prescription Medications

• Blood thinner – Warfarin



- Dietary Supplement
- Cranberry
- Ginkgo Biloba

Bruising & Bleeding

Side Effects from Combining

Prescription Medications

+

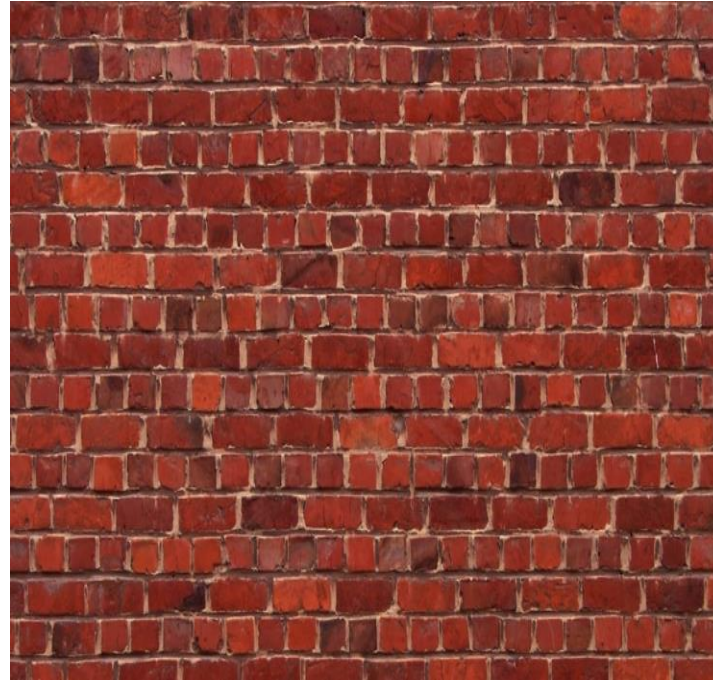
Over-the-Counter
Non-Prescription Medications

• Blood thinner – Warfarin

+

• Dietary Supplement
- Ginseng

Blood Clots



Abrupt Stops are Usually Good

An Abrupt Stop In Drugs Isn't Good

It can often trigger serious problems

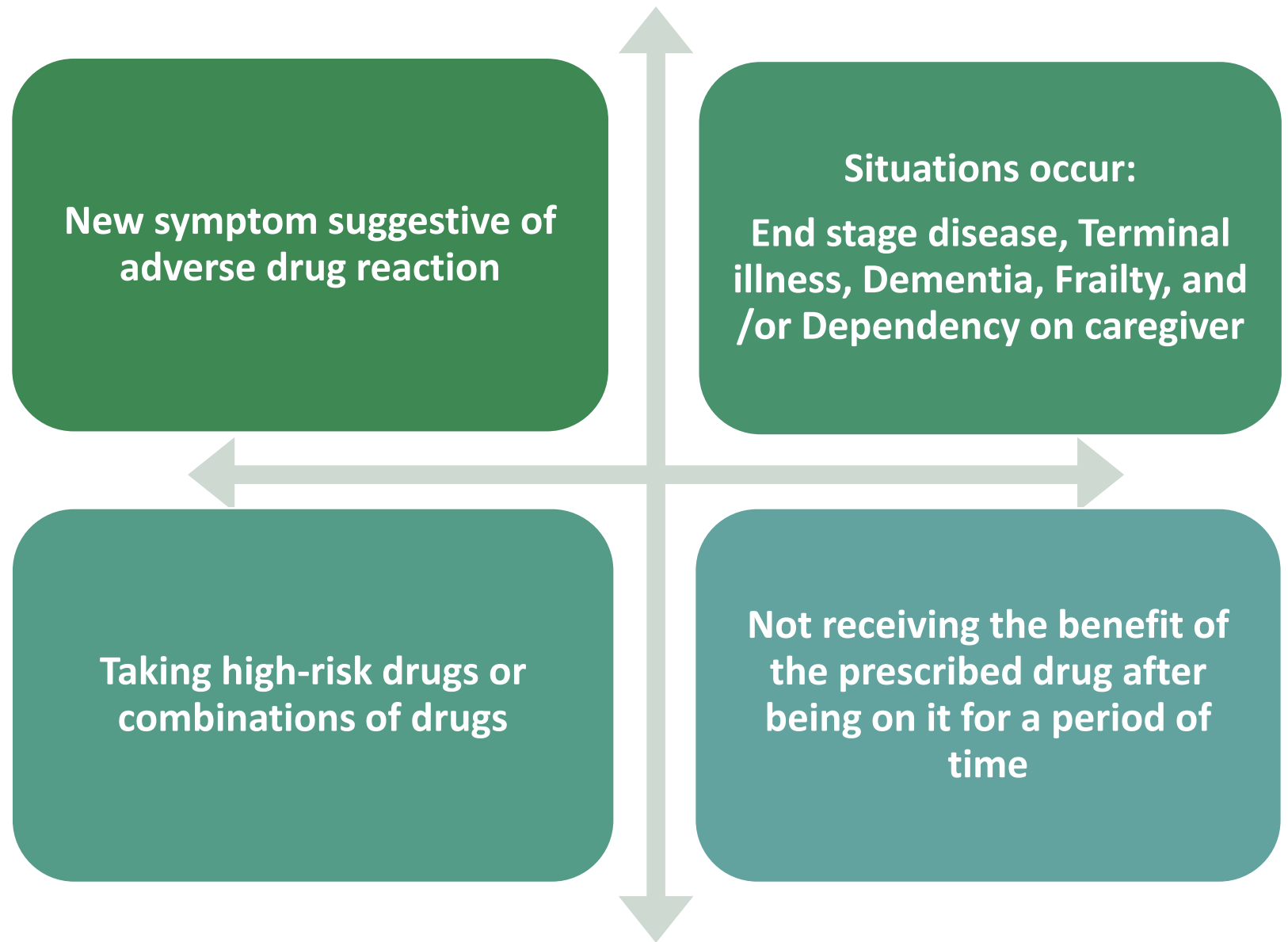
Antidepressants, heartburn and sleeping pills

⇒ Symptoms worsen

Opioids (OxyContin, Percocet, Vicodin) and other controlled substances such as Xanax and others (typically if taken for more than 2 weeks)

⇒ Physical & Psychological symptoms - withdrawal symptoms of anxiety, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sleeplessness

**There are
some times
where it
makes
sense to
stop or
wean off**





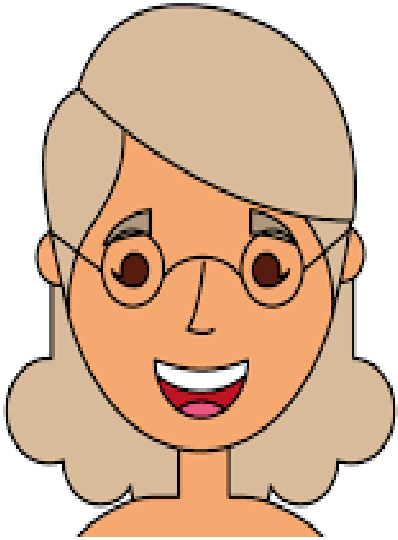
Case Example - Longtime Prilosec Use

- Took Prilosec (proton inhibitor) for heartburn for 12 years
- Missed one dose; triggered an explosive chest pain - thought she was having heart attack and rushed to hospital which was good
- To get off Prilosec combined calibrated reduction and diet

When taking a proton-pump inhibitor too long:

1. Missing a dose can cause stomach to overproduce acid; **mimic heart attack**
2. Increases the risk of getting a very hard to treat **gastrointestinal infection**
3. **Depletes vitamin D, B12, calcium and magnesium**

Case Example - Healthy Alternatives



- Took Oxybutynin for 5 months for an overactive bladder and Sertaline (Zoloft) for anxiety.
- Oxybutynin gave her headaches, extreme dry mouth, fatigue, and only mildly helped reduce bathroom trips.
- Zoloft contributed to a 40 pound weight gain.

• What she did –

- **Doctor weaned her off of Zoloft as hard stop isn't good.**
- **She opted for meditation for reducing anxiety.**
- **She opted for lifestyle change in place of the Oxybutynin – she drank less coffee and learned to do Kegel exercises to strengthen her bladder muscles**



So How Can You Avoid Risks?

Ask Your Dr.

1. Is this safe for someone my age?
2. Will a lower dose work just as well?
3. How long is 'safe' to take this?
4. Do I need to treat this so aggressively?
5. Can I stop taking this?
6. What are potential side effects or interactions with other meds?

Take Someone With You to Listen and Advocate



Ask Your Dr.

1. ADHD
2. Back and Joint Pain
3. Dementia
4. Mild Depression
5. Heartburn
6. Insomnia
7. Low Testosterone
8. Osteopenia
9. Overactive Bladder
10. PreDiabetes
11. PreHypertension
12. Obesity



Are there non-drug options?
Lifestyle change?

Have a complex medicine regimen

Medication adherence challenges

Take a med that is especially problematic in seniors

Know the 3 Big Signs of Potential Risk

- Assess Your Risk

Have a complex medicine regimen

- 1. Have multiple doctors prescribing meds**
- 2. Use multiple pharmacies - e.g. mail order and retail**
- 3. Take more than 5 medications a day (including OTC, herbal, supplements)**
- 4. Take more than 2 types of medication administration - e.g. oral, drops, patches**
- 5. Medications or doses change frequently**

Medication adherence challenges

33%

of older adults don't adhere to their medicine regimens - even higher with cognitive impairment

- 1. Not following the medication dosage instructions**
- 2. Forgetting to take a dose**
- 3. Combining with something that could cause an interaction**
- 4. Cost of meds too high**
- 5. Taking multiple meds causes confusion**

Take a med that is especially problematic in seniors

- **Anticoagulants – e.g. Warfarin**
- **Antihistamines**
- **Antipsychotics**
- **Anti-seizure – e.g. Dilantin**
- **Anxiolytics – e.g. Ativan**
- **Beta-blockers**
- **Digoxin**
- **Insulin**
- **Narcotics**
- **NSAIDS – e.g. Advil, Ibuprofen**
- **Tricyclic antidepressants**

Give Your Drugs a Check-Up



Duplicates ● Expiration dates ● Excessive doses ● Discontinued medications

Get Organized

- Maintain your daily routine
- Use Aides
 - Memory aides like having drugs that you take with meals in the kitchen
 - Pill organizers or blister packaging
 - Vial of life
 - Wallet Card
 - Pill app and phone or computer reminders
- Detailed medication logs - give copies to family members, caregivers, providers
- Dispose of medications that you don't use anymore – and do it properly - Brunswick Co. Sheriff Office



Medical Alert Wallet Card

Name		
Address	Religion	
In Case of Emergency Notify:		
Name		
Address	Phone	
Doctor Name		
City	State	Phone
Illness		
Medication	Blood Type	



NEW

Ask Your Dr. About *Pharmacogenomics*

Blood Test Covered by



1. How genetics affect patient response to medications
2. Genetic testing analyzing patient drug metabolism
3. Information obtained can indicate changes in medication or dosing



Avoid Risks

1. Take risk assessment
2. Take steps to avoid risk
3. Ask questions
 - Of Yourself
 - Your doctor
 - Your Sr. Care Concierge Pharmacist





QUESTIONS?

- or contact me later

Consider

Sr. Care Concierge Rx Services

- 1. Medication Risk Review, Prevention and Management**
- 2. Pharmaceutical Concierge Assistance**
- 3. Ask the Pharmacist –
by phone, online, email**



PHARM ASSIST Us