

## Medications and Falls: Identifying the Risks

Many prescription and non-prescription medications have effects that may increase the risk for falls. Older adults and their care providers should be aware of which medications are more likely to cause a fall, and circumstances where this risk increases even more:

- New medication added
- Use of a PRN medication
- Medication dose changed
- Medication discontinued
- Change in timing of meal
- Crushing a medication not previously crushed
- Change in dosage form of medication (ER→IR)
- Change in timing of medication administration
- Change in renal function
- Medication Error

To reduce the risk, develop a care plan that includes medication reductions when appropriate, and a monitoring plan for potential side effects. Implement other strategies, including non-pharmacologic options such as rising slowly or using assistive devices to manage conditions, address patient barriers, and reduce fall risk.

- STOP medications when possible
- SWITCH to safer alternatives
- REDUCE to the lowest effective dose

Medications that Increase Risk for Falls	Fall Risk Level*	Adverse Effects Increase Risk for Falls												
		Dizziness	Drowsiness	Syncope	Confusion	Sedation	Gait Disturbances	Coordination Problems	Decreased Reflexes	Tremors	Weakness	Hypoglycemia	Blurred Vision	Nocturia
Anticonvulsants	HIGH	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				
Antipsychotics	HIGH	X	X		X	X	X							
Anxiolytics	HIGH	X	X		X	X								
Narcotics, Muscle Relaxants	HIGH	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X			
Sedatives, Hypnotics	HIGH	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X			
Alcohol	HIGH	X	X		X	X	X	X	X		X		X	
Allergy and Cold Preparations	MED	X	X		X	X				X			X	
Anticholinergics	MED	X	X		X	X							X	
Antidepressants	MED	X	X		X	X								
Antihypertensives	MED	X		X										
Antidiabetics	MED	X		X	X			X		X	X	X		
Diuretics, Laxatives	LOW	X		X							X			X
Ophthalmic Drops/Ointments	LOW												X	
Nitroglycerin SL Tablets	LOW	X		X										

\* <https://www.ahrq.gov/professionals/systems/hospital/fallpxtoolkit/fallpxtk-tool3i.html>