

Medicines associated with falls

Taking certain medicines can make you more likely to fall. However, while they may contribute to falls in some people, they don't cause falls in everyone. Medicines act in different ways, e.g.

- **Medicines acting on the brain** can cause drowsiness, loss of balance and slow reaction times
- **Medicines that lower blood pressure or slow the heart** can cause faintness, dizzy spells or 'legs to give way' e.g. blood pressure may suddenly fall when standing up or stretching.

People on FOUR or more medicines (polypharmacy) are at greater risk of falling. Regular medication reviews play an important part in preventing medicines-related falls.

Common examples of medicines acting on the brain:

- Sleeping tablets and anxiety treatments e.g. temazepam, diazepam, zolpidem, zopiclone,
- Some antidepressants may cause drowsiness* e.g. amitriptyline, mirtazapine, citalopram, fluoxetine
- Some antidepressants may cause dizziness e.g. venlafaxine, duloxetine
- Strong painkillers e.g. codeine, tramadol, fentanyl
- Antipsychotics* (medicines for mental health problems and agitation) e.g. olanzapine, quetiapine, risperidone, haloperidol
- Medicines for Parkinson's disease* e.g. co-beneldopa and co-careldopa
- Some antihistamines e.g. chlorphenamine and cinnarizine
- Medicines for epilepsy e.g. phenytoin and carbamazepine
- Medicines for nausea, vomiting, travel sickness e.g. cyclizine

*these medicines can also lower blood pressure

Common examples of medicines that lower blood pressure or slow the heart:

- Medicines to treat high blood pressure and heart disease e.g. digoxin, doxazosin, lisinopril, losartan, amlodipine, diltiazem, atenolol, glyceryl trinitrate, fluid tablets (examples below)

Other commonly-used medicines known to increase the risk of falls:

- Medicines for dementia may cause fainting or dizziness e.g. donepezil, galantamine, rivastigmine and memantine
- Medicines for diabetes may cause dizziness e.g. insulin, pioglitazone, gliclazide
- Medicines for bladder overactivity may cause blurred vision e.g. oxybutynin, tolterodine
- Some eye drops or eye ointments may cause blurred vision e.g. latanoprost, pilocarpine
- Fluid tablets may cause rushing to the toilet e.g. bendroflumethiazide, indapamide, furosemide
- Laxatives may cause rushing to the toilet e.g. senna, macrogols

Refer to British National Formulary (BNF) latest edition for further examples of medicines listed above

If a resident seems to be at an increased risk of falling due to their medicines, the care-home nurse or manager should discuss this with the resident's pharmacist or GP.