

Preventing Falls by Managing Medicines

Patient Information

Medicines can cause falls

When taken correctly, medicines can help control medical conditions or cure diseases and contribute to improved health and wellbeing.

Side effects from some medicines may include dizziness, unsteadiness and drowsiness including increased risk of falls. Such side effects may be more likely when multiple medications are taken.

As you age, your body processes medicines differently. Doses that once worked well may have to be adjusted.

This doesn't mean you should stop taking your medicines, but you should be aware of the effects, good and bad, and learn how to manage them.

It is always important to let your Doctor know what other over the counter and complementary medicines you are taking in case they may interact with your prescribed medicines.

Why might medicines cause you to fall?

- Slowed balance reactions
- Drowsiness
- Dizziness
- Light-headedness
- Unsteadiness, poor balance
- Blurred or double vision
- Difficulty thinking or reduced alertness
- Needing to rush to the toilet

The common medicines that may cause falls

Medicines for sleep, mental health (e.g. mood/anxiety) and seizures can contribute to your risk of falling by affecting balance.

Diuretics (water pills) or laxatives can cause you to rush to the toilet.

Blood pressure medicine can cause dizziness especially when you stand or change position.

Diabetes medicine can cause low glucose levels.

For more information about whether your medicines can increase the risk of falls, speak to your doctor or pharmacist.

Learning about your medicines might help to prevent falls

Ask your doctor or pharmacist for the name and purpose of each of your medicines if you are unsure so that you know:

- When and how to take them,
- How long to keep taking your medicines,
- What side effects to watch out for,
- What action to take to prevent or deal with side effects, and
- What to avoid while taking medicine e.g. alcohol.

The need for medicines can change over time. Have your doctor review ALL your medicines to ensure these are the right combination for you.

For more information about:

- hospital and specialist services, go to www.cdhb.health.nz
- your health and medicines, go to www.healthinfo.org.nz

Notes
