

OLDER AND WISER: Keeping track of what medications we're taking important for overall health

[Margaret Coates](#) / Contributing writer

FEBRUARY 14, 2020 02:00 AM



file photo Paul McGrath, North Shore News

Keeping track of medications, whether over the counter or prescribed, and understanding possible interactions between them and possible overprescribing can be overwhelming. So maybe it's time for a medication review.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information reports that seniors are mostly taking six commonly used drug classes that are cardiovascular related, with Statins being the most used drug class. Angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors, used to treat heart failure and high blood pressure, and PPIs, used to treat gastroesophageal reflux disease and peptic ulcer disease, were the next most used drug classes.

The healthy aging portal also states that a "Medication review by a doctor or pharmacist helps to assess the benefits and risks of prescribed drugs and reduce unnecessary medications. Research shows that stopping unnecessary, inappropriate or potentially harmful drugs is a promising way to reduce risk of falls and prolong life, without significant risk of withdrawal."

You may not be one of those older people who are taking unnecessary medications, but you and your doctor should be aware of medication interactions including vitamins, supplements, and over the counter medications for pain or colds and the flu.

Perhaps it's time to make an appointment with a health care professional such as your doctor or a pharmacist. Most pharmacies will do an assessment, but it might be better to call ahead and make an appointment – you don't want to irritate those people who are waiting to get their prescriptions renewed. A simple step might also be writing down your prescriptions and other drugs such as vitamins, over the counter medications that you use regularly in order to keep track and pass on to a new doctor when they might be prescribing a drug.

An issue that B.C.'s seniors advocate has raised is the overmedication of people in care facilities. A November 2016 report called "Making Progress: Placement, Drugs and Therapy Update" found that many older adults in B.C. care facilities are being overprescribed medications, such as antipsychotics and antidepressants. The good news is the report found that B.C. has experienced a 14 per cent decrease in the rate of antipsychotic use since 2015. But B.C.'s numbers are still higher than many provinces. Home Instead Senior Care North Shore recommends that caregivers for loved ones in care facilities might want to step in and do an assessment to make sure all medications are appropriate and will not cause issues for the older person.

A professional medication review is a good way to keep from becoming overwhelmed with keeping track of prescriptions and over the counter drugs.

Give it a try.

© 2020 North Shore News