

Anticholinergic Pocket Reference Card

Because so many drugs have **anticholinergic** properties—and many of these are contained in over-the-counter products—anticholinergics are used by many older adults, including about 1/3 of people with dementia.^{1,2} The elderly are more sensitive to anticholinergic adverse effects, and people with dementia have a high risk of adverse cognitive and psychiatric effects from these drugs.^{3,4} **Adverse effects attributed to anticholinergics include sedation, confusion, delirium, constipation, urinary retention, dry mouth, dry eyes, blurred vision, photophobia, tachycardia, decreased sweating, increased body temperature, falls, and others.**⁵ Some evidence suggests that anticholinergics contribute to behavioral disturbances and psychosis in dementia.³ The purpose of this reference card is to help clinicians reduce anticholinergic use by vulnerable elders, especially those with cognitive impairment. Tapering may be necessary to prevent withdrawal symptoms when discontinuing potent anticholinergics that have been used chronically.²

The following lists medications with known anticholinergic effects by therapeutic use. The list is not all-inclusive, but includes many commonly used anticholinergics. Clinicians might want to especially consider the risk benefit balance of tricyclic antidepressants, immediate-release oxybutynin, GI antispasmodics, and sedating antihistamines, as these drugs are not recommended for vulnerable elders if alternative treatments are available.⁷

Antihistamines / Allergy / Cough & Cold Medicines

Azelastine nasal spray
Brompheniramine
Carbinoxamine
Chlorpheniramine
Clemastine
Cyproheptadine
Dexbrompheniramine
Dexchlorpheniramine
Diphenhydramine
Hydroxyzine
Mepyramine
Olopatadine nasal spray
Phenyltoloxamine
Promethazine
Triprolidine

Anxiety

Hydroxyzine

Bladder Antispasmodics

Darifenacin
Flavoxate
Oxybutynin
Solifenacin
Tolterodine
Trospium

Motion Sickness / Dizziness / Nausea

Dimenhydrinate
Meclizine
Prochlorperazine
Promethazine
Scopolamine
Trimethobenzamide

Movement Disorders

Benzotropine
Procyclidine
Trihexyphenidyl

Muscle Spasms & Pain

Cyclobenzaprine
Meperidine
Orphenadrine
Phenyltoloxamine

Stomach and GI Tract

Ulcer and Reflux:
Cimetidine
Glycopyrrolate
Ranitidine

GI Antispasmodics:

Atropine
Belladonna Alkaloids
Clidinium
Dicyclomine
Hyoscyamine
Methscopolamine
Propantheline

Seizures / Mood Disorders

Carbamazepine

Insomnia / Sleep

Diphenhydramine
Doxylamine

Antipsychotics

Chlorpromazine
Clozapine
Loxapine
Molindone
Olanzapine
Pimozide
Promethazine
Quetiapine
Thioridazine

Asthma and C.O.P.D.

Glycopyrrolate
Ipratropium*
Tiotropium*

*Unknown whether central nervous system effects are important.

Tricyclic Antidepressants

Amitriptyline
Clomipramine
Desipramine
Doxepin
Imipramine
Nortriptyline
Protriptyline
Trimipramine

References

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