

Managing Anticholinergic Side Effects

from www.medicinesafety.co.uk

General approach is to review patients regularly and:

- **Awareness.** Know your anticholinergic effects.
- **Alternatives.** Use lower risk medicines or non-drugs.
- **Additive effects.** Don't co-prescribe anticholinergics.
- **Amounts.** Keep doses low, especially in elderly.

Signs could include:

- Decreased cognition, or ability to take care of self.
- Falls.
- Daytime sleep.

Sedation, dizziness, confusion, hallucinations



Urinary retention



Anticholinergic effects



Dry throat, dry mouth, constipation

Signs could include:

- Difficulty swallowing.
- Dental caries.
- Eating less.
- Gut ache.

Signs could include:

- Difficulty reading/ using glasses.
- Eye infections.

Blurred vision, dry eyes



Tachycardia



Feeling hot, decreased sweating

Signs could include:

- Dehydration.
- Decreased exercise.

Signs could include:

- Worsening angina or heart condition.
- Palpitations, dizziness.

Indication	Higher anticholinergic potential	Example LOWER anticholinergic choices
Analgesia for neuropathic pain	Amitriptyline, imipramine, nortriptyline, carbamazepine	Gabapentin, pregabalin, capsaicin cream, non-pharmacological options
Antidepressant	Amitriptyline, imipramine, nortriptyline, paroxetine, sertraline	Venlafaxine, trazodone, duloxetine, mirtazapine, citalopram, sertraline, psychotherapy
Antiemetics and vertigo	Prochlorperazine, cyclizine, promethazine, hyoscine	Ondansetron, domperidone, treat the cause of these symptoms (e.g. betahistine for Ménière's)
Antihistamine	Chlorphenamine, hydroxyzine, promethazine, diphenhydramine	Cetirizine, desloratadine, fexofenadine, topical options (for e.g. hay fever, skin)
Antipsychotic	Chlorpromazine, clozapine, olanzapine	Aripiprazole, ziprasidone, quetiapine, risperidone
Gastrointestinal spasm	Dicycloverine, hyoscine, propantheline	Mebeverine, peppermint oil, diet changes
Urology: incontinence, overactive bladder	Oxybutynin, solifenacin, tolterodine, trospium, propiverine	Mirabegron, alpha blockers (for selected men), non-pharmacological options