

**Taking Charge: Good Medical Care for the Elderly  
and How to Get It**

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**APPENDIX G**

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## Appendix G

### Common Drug-Drug Interactions

The medications listed below are commonly prescribed for the elderly; various drug-drug interactions frequently occur. Be sure to discuss these medications with your loved one's physician and ask about her risk for interactions.

DRUG	PURPOSE	INTERACTS WITH	RISK
Celebrex (celecoxib)	NSAID prescribed for arthritis pain	Other NSAIDS such as aspirin or ibuprofen	Increased risk of ulcers
Celebrex	NSAID prescribed for arthritis pain	ACE inhibitors (ex. Vasotec)	May reduce effect of antihypertensive
Lipitor (atorvastatin calcium)	Lowers cholesterol	Drugs prescribed to suppress the immune system	May increase creatinine levels, causing muscle weakness and pain
Norvasc (amlodipine besylate)	Controls high blood pressure and angina	Viagra (prescription erectile dysfunction medication)	May cause decrease in blood pressure, dizziness, fainting
Prilosec Delayed Reaction Capsules (omeprazole)	Used to treat gastro esophageal reflux disease; eases ulcers and heartburn	Prescription drugs containing diazepam, e.g., Valium	Increases amount of diazepam available in blood; can increase drowsiness
Prilosec Delayed Reaction Capsules (omeprazole)	See above	Prescription blood thinners (Coumadin, warfarin)	May cause abnormal bleeding
Synthroid (levothyroxine sodium)	Thyroid replacement for those with deficiencies	Prescription cholesterol drugs containing cholestyramine or colestipol	Reduces amount of thyroid available in blood; must be taken six hours apart
Synthroid	See above	Prescription blood thinners (e.g., Coumadin, warfarin)	May cause abnormal bleeding

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DRUG	PURPOSE	INTERACTS WITH	RISK
Synthroid	See above	Tricyclic antidepressants such as Elavil	Enhances effects of both drugs, nervousness
Vicodin (hydrocodone bitartrate and acetaminophen)	Narcotic pain reliever, treats moderate to severe pain	Drugs containing other narcotics and Acetaminophen	May suppress the central nervous system (CNS), causing mental and physical impairment and irregular breathing
Vicodin	Narcotic pain reliever, treats moderate to severe pain	MAO inhibitors (a type of antidepressant)	May increase effects of antidepressant; may suppress CNS
Xanax (alprazolam)	Used to treat panic disorder, anxiety, insomnia	Other psychotropics	May suppress CNS, causing confusion, impaired concentration, and coordination
Xanax	See above	Prescription anticonvulsants	See above
Xanax	See above	Antihistamines	See above
Zoloft (sertraline HCl)	Used to treat depression, panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder	MAO inhibitors, a type of antidepressant such as Marplan, Nardil, Parnate	May cause an elevation in blood pressure, sudden fever, and even death. Zoloft should not be used within two weeks of starting/stopping an MAO inhibitor
Zoloft	See above	Prescription blood thinners	May cause abnormal bleeding
Zoloft	See above	Prescription triptan migraine drugs	Stimulates constriction of blood vessels; may raise blood pressure and cause coordination problems

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Common over-the-counter (OTC) drugs and herbal remedies such as those listed below also frequently interact with medications commonly prescribed for the elderly. Be sure your loved one tells her physician if she is taking any of these compounds and be sure she asks her doctor about the potential for interactions.

DRUG	PURPOSE	INTERACTS WITH	RISK
Advil (ibuprophen)	NSAID prescribed for fever and for pain and stiffness caused by osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis	Blood pressure medications	May cause edema (fluid retention) and swelling
Advil	See above	Prescription blood thinners	May cause abnormal bleeding
Advil	See above	Prescription or OTC drugs containing aspirin	May increase side effects of Advil such as stomachache
Aleve (naproxen sodium)	Reduces inflammation and pain; reduces fever	Prescription or OTC drugs containing aspirin	Increases risk of intestinal bleeding
Aleve	Reduces inflammation and pain; reduces fever	Prescription blood thinners such as Coumadin, warfarin	May cause abnormal bleeding
Aleve	See above	Herbal supplement ginkgo biloba	May cause severe intestinal bleeding
Bayer Aspirin	To reduce blood clots; to ease pain and inflammation	Prescription blood thinners	May cause abnormal bleeding
Bayer Aspirin	See above	Prescription blood pressure medications	May enhance effect of blood pressure meds
Bayer Aspirin	Reduces blood clotting; eases pain and inflammation	Prescription or OTC meds with ibuprophen or naproxin	Increases irritation of stomach lining

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DRUG	PURPOSE	INTERACTS WITH	RISK
Benedryl Allergy & Cold (diphenhydramine HCL and acetaminophen)	To relieve symptoms of allergy; reduces cold symptoms	Prescription or OTC meds containing diphenhydramine or other antihistamines	Increases drowsiness, may cause sedation, dizziness, low blood pressure
Benedryl Allergy & Cold	To relieve symptoms of allergy; reduces cold symptoms	Prescription medications that sedate such as Xanax, Valium	Drowsiness, sedation, dizziness, low blood pressure
Benedryl Allergy & Cold	See above	MAO inhibitors (a type of antidepressant)	Drowsiness, sedation, dizziness, low blood pressure
Benedryl Allergy & Cold	See above	OTC sleeping medications such as Somnex	See above
Imodium A-D (loperamide HCl)	To control diarrhea	Antibiotics (cephalo-sporins, erythromycin, tetracycline)	Suppresses effects of Imodium, prolonging diarrhea
Imodium	To control diarrhea	All prescription narcotic pain relievers	Enhances effect of Imodium; risk of severe constipation
Metamucil (psyllium husk)	Adds fiber to diet; to relieve constipation	All prescriptions containing digoxin (to treat congestive heart failure and arrhythmia)	Interferes with absorption, reducing effectiveness of heart meds
Metamucil	Adds fiber to diet; to relieve constipation	All prescription and OTC drugs containing aspirin	Interferes with absorption, reducing effectiveness of aspirin
Pepcid AC (famotidine)	Relieves and prevents acid indigestion, heartburn	All OTC antacids taken within one hour of Pepcid AC	Effectiveness of Pepcid AC is reduced

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DRUG	PURPOSE	INTERACTS WITH	RISK
Tums (calcium carbonate)	See above	Prescription drugs containing tetracycline	Interferes with absorption and reduces effectiveness of these Rx drugs.
Tums	Relieves and prevents acid indigestion, heartburn	Prescription hypertension meds	Interferes with absorption and reduces effectiveness of Rx drugs. Take Tums one hour before or two hours after
Tums	See above	OTC drugs containing calcium carbonate (e.g., Citracal, Caltrate)	May lead to serious calcium overload and kidney failure
Tylenol (acetaminophen)	To reduce fever and minor pain	Any prescription or OTC NSAID or other drugs containing acetaminophen	Overuse leads to kidney and liver failure; use four grams daily or less
Tylenol	See above	Rx blood thinners	Abnormal bleeding

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