



American Stroke Association®  
A division of the American Heart Association.

Together to End Stroke®

# Common Medications That Raise Fall Risk After Stroke

*Important Information for Survivors of Stroke and Caregivers*

## Why Medications Matter After Stroke

After a stroke, you may take several medications. These help with recovery and prevent another stroke. Some medications can increase your fall risk. They may cause dizziness, drowsiness, low blood pressure, or other side effects.

The way our bodies handle medications changes as we get older. A medication that worked fine before may now cause side effects. Taking many medications increases the chance of side effects.

**IMPORTANT:** Never stop taking medications without talking to your health care team first.

## COMMON MEDICATION TYPES THAT CAN INCREASE FALL RISK •

The following are examples of medications that can raise risk of falling. This is not a complete list. Make sure your health care team knows about all your medications. Include prescribed and over the counter medications, including vitamins and supplements.

Side effects from these commonly prescribed medications can include:



Problems with balance and thinking



Sleepiness



Vision changes



Lightheadedness



Dizziness when you stand



Fatigue

### Blood Pressure and Heart Medications

- » Metoprolol (Toprol)
- » Clonidine (Catapres)
- » Furosemide (Lasix)
- » Lisinopril (Zestril)

### Sleep Medications

- » Zolpidem (Ambien)
- » Eszopiclone (Lunesta)
- » Diphenhydramine (found in Tylenol PM)

### Pain Medications

- » Oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet)
- » Hydrocodone (Vicodin)
- » Tramadol (Ultram)

### Muscle Relaxants

- » Methocarbamol (Robaxin)
- » Cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril)

### Anti-Anxiety and Depression Medications

- » Diazepam (Valium)
- » Alprazolam (Xanax)
- » Paroxetine (Paxil)

### Over-the-Counter Medications

Even medications bought over the counter can increase fall risk:

- » Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
- » Motion sickness medicines
- » Some allergy medicines

## WARNING SIGNS TO WATCH FOR •

A stroke can lead to fatigue, dizziness and balance problems, similar to the side effects of some medications. This makes it extra important to control fall risk in other ways.

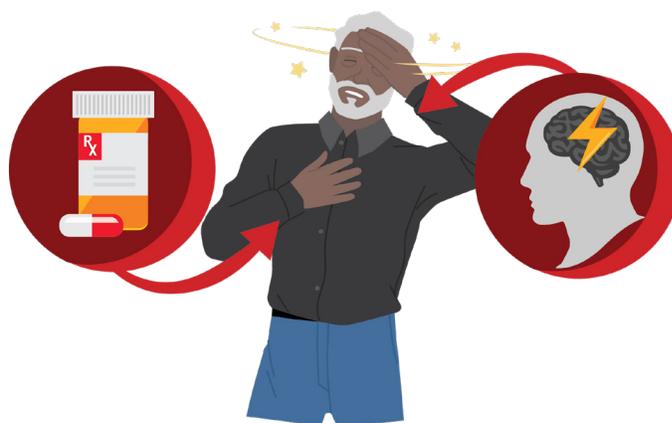
### Because stroke can cause these symptoms on its own:

- » Use mobility aids as directed
- » Make your home as safe as possible (see Home Safety Checklist)
- » Follow safety routines (see Caregiver Tips sheet)

### Call your health care team about your medications if you notice:

- » New or worsening dizziness, especially when you stand up
- » More drowsiness or fatigue than usual
- » Feeling faint or like you might pass out
- » New blurry vision or vision changes
- » Sudden changes in balance or coordination
- » Feeling more confused than usual
- » Having more trouble thinking clearly than usual

Notice if symptoms get worse after dose changes or starting a new medication. Your health care team will know how best to manage what's happening.



### Remember:

Even if some symptoms are from your stroke, certain medications can make them worse. Don't hesitate to ask your health care team about any concerns.

## WHAT YOU CAN DO •

### Keep Track

- » Use a medication tracker (see our [Medication Tracker](#))
- » Update it whenever medications change

### At Your Next Health Care Visit

- » Bring all your medications to appointments
- » Include prescribed medications, over the counter medications, vitamins, and supplements
- » Bring your medication list to all health care appointments

### Your health care provider may:

- » Take you off a medication when possible
- » Change to one that's safer
- » Lower the dose

### Questions to Ask Your Health Care Team

- » Which of my medications might increase my fall risk?
- » Are there safer alternatives for any of these medications?
- » Can any of my medications be reduced or stopped?
- » What side effects should I watch for?
- » How long after taking a medication should I be extra careful moving around?

### Remember:

The benefits of your medications often outweigh the risks. Work with your health care team to find the right balance. You need to manage your health and reduce fall risk.

## Additional Resources

- » [Home Safety Checklist](#)
- » [Medication Tracker](#)
- » [Fear of Falling Fact Sheet](#)