



KNOW YOUR MEDICATIONS

If you take five or more medications, it is important to review them.

It's important to keep a list of ALL medications, including vitamins, supplements, and over the counter medications.

Taking multiple medications can lead to problems, particularly for people over 65.

Talk to a health care provider...

Discuss your current medications with a health care provider or pharmacist, especially when you are prescribed new medication, to ensure:

- The medications you are taking are helping your current medical problems
- Your medications and supplements can be taken together safely
- Any new medical problems you have are not side-effects of medications





TROUBLE SLEEPING?

Changing your sleep habits may help you sleep better.

If you are having trouble getting to sleep or staying asleep, and you feel tired or have trouble functioning during the daytime, there are changes you can make to improve your rest that can be more effective than medication.

Try these simple lifestyle changes that may help you to sleep better:

- Exercise regularly
- Avoid caffeine after 3PM
- Limit alcohol use
- Delay your bedtime
- Meditation

Remember that...

There are many possible side effects for both prescription and over the counter sleep remedies. They may be habit-forming, cause cloudy thinking/daytime drowsiness, and increase your risk of falling.

Talk to a health care provider...

About habits that may help you sleep better as an alternative to medication.



LEARN MORE:

choosingwiselycanada.org/sleeping-pills-and-older-adults

A photograph of a woman with short brown hair and glasses, wearing a yellow sweater and a grey scarf. She is smiling and looking down at an orange pill she is holding in her hands. The background is a blurred kitchen or living area.

LONG-TERM MEDICATION USE

Keep a list of all medications.

Talk to a health care provider...

To be sure your long-term medications are still working for you.

It is important to keep an up-to-date list of current medications including vitamins, supplements, and over the counter medications.

For each medication you take, it is useful to know and record:

- What the purpose of the medication is
- How you will know if the medication is working
- Possible harms or side effects of the medication that you should watch out for
- How long you will have to take the medication



SAFE OPIOID USE

When are opioids necessary?

Talk to a health care provider...

About exercise, physical therapy, or non-opioid medication, including over the counter or prescription medications that may help to manage pain.

Remember that...

- Opioids should not be used as a first line of treatment for back pain, headaches, or other chronic pain
- There is no evidence for the benefits of long-term opioid use for pain treatment
- The side effects of taking opioids can outweigh the benefits
- Opioids become less effective over time as your body becomes used to them. This can lead to higher doses to get the same pain relief.

Common opioids include...

- Hydromorphone (Dilaudid®)
- Morphine (Kadian®, M-Eslon®, MS-Contin®, Statex®)
- Codeine (Tylenol No. 3®)
- Oxycodone (OxyNeo®, Percocet®)
- Tramadol (Ralivia®, Tridural®, Zytram®)



LEARN MORE:

choosingwiselycanada.org/pamphlet/opioids/



MIGRAINE MANAGEMENT

Understanding migraine triggers is a helpful tool for managing migraines.

Lifestyle changes and reducing triggers for migraines may help reduce the frequency and symptoms of migraine headaches:

- Keep a diary to record migraine triggers such as certain foods, bright lights, or stress
- Exercise regularly and keep hydrated
- Establish a consistent sleep routine

Remember that:

- Overuse of medication, including over-the-counter painkillers, can increase the frequency of headaches
- Imaging tests such as CT or MRI, unless recommended by a health care provider based on your medical history, are not helpful to diagnose migraines and can lead to further unnecessary testing, stress and anxiety

Talk to a health care provider...

To find out if imaging tests are needed to diagnose the cause of your migraines and develop a plan for treating and relieving migraines.



LEARN MORE:

◀ choosingwiselycanada.org/pamphlet/imaging-tests-for-headaches

choosingwiselycanada.org/pamphlet/treating-frequent-headaches-with-pain-relievers/ ▶





BACK PAIN— IMAGING TESTS & PRESCRIPTION MEDS

May not be required.

By following the steps below, most people who experience back pain feel better in about a month:

- Massage
- Non-opioid medication for pain relief
- Physiotherapy
- Low-impact exercise including water aerobics

Unless there are red flags, imaging such as x-ray, CT or MRI may complicate recovery.

Examples of red flags may include a history of cancer, unexplained weight loss, fever or recent infection. Sharing your health history with a health care provider will help determine the best treatment.

Remember that...

- *Prescription medication including opioids should be a last resort*
- Evidence shows that opioids, including codeine, are not more effective than other prescription pain medications for back pain
- Opioids become less effective over time as your body becomes used to them. This can lead to higher doses to get the same pain relief.

Talk to a health care provider...

About your back pain and general health to see if imaging tests are needed to diagnose your back pain and work together to find the right treatment for you.



LEARN MORE:

◀ choosingwiselycanada.org/pamphlet/treating-lower-back-pain

choosingwiselycanada.org/pamphlet/imaging-tests-for-lower-back-pain ▶





AVOID BED REST FOR PAIN

Too much bed rest can slow recovery.

Research shows that staying active has many positive benefits and can help you to continue to do the activities you enjoy for longer. Bed rest and inactivity should only be prescribed if certain activities are proven to cause harm.

Talk to a health care provider...

- Before increasing bed rest or inactivity for pain relief

Remember that:

- Daily exercise will contribute to overall health for most illnesses and injuries
- Even modified activity in most cases can help you heal faster



AVOID LONG ABSENCES FROM WORK

There is a positive link between work and your overall health.

Talk to your health care provider or care team before pursuing an extended absence from work.

Care team members may include occupational therapists, physical therapists, mental health supports or any care professional involved in your treatment.

Long absences from work can contribute to poor health and slower recovery. The decision to miss work or reduce work activities should be based on your abilities and in line with your needs to reduce harm and safely improve your recovery.

Conversations with your care team will ensure that your ability to work is based on your health priorities.





TESTING FOR VITAMIN D DEFICIENCY

Is it necessary?

Vitamin D deficiency is common in most populations.

Those who are prone to vitamin D deficiency have limited sun exposure and often live at higher latitudes including Canada.

Testing for vitamin D deficiency in healthy people is generally not needed and over the counter vitamin D supplements can be taken as part of a daily routine.

Talk to a health care provider...

To ensure that you are taking the right amount of vitamin D supplements.



LEARN MORE:

choosingwiselycanada.org/pamphlet/vitamin-d-tests



X-RAY FOR ANKLE OR FOOT INJURIES

Is it necessary?

Did you know...

The majority of ankle or foot injuries are soft tissue injuries, including sprains or minor fractures, which have been shown to heal without specific intervention.

An ankle or foot x-ray may not be needed for minor injuries and will not improve the outcome of the injury or change the course of treatment.

Talk to a health care provider...

About a physical exam to confirm whether an x-ray is needed for your injury and discuss the best methods for treatment to reduce pain and improve your condition.

Consider physiotherapy for treatment of minor ankle or foot injuries to safely keep active and prevent further injury.



MRI FOR HIP OR KNEE OSTEOARTHRITIS

MRI is not usually required for osteoarthritis.

Talk to a health care provider if you are experiencing pain in your hips or knees.

A health care provider can effectively diagnose hip or knee osteoarthritis based on:

- Your health history, including symptoms and concerns
- A physical examination
- X-ray imaging for your hip
- Weight-bearing x-ray imaging for your knee

Ordering unnecessary MRI scans when your x-ray indicates osteoarthritis often results in increased wait times for patients. This can cause unnecessary anxiety while waiting for a specialist consultation to discuss treatment plans.

