

# Methodist Health System

## Safely Reducing the Number of Medications You Take

It is common for older adults to take several medications. This can lead to an increased risk of falls, disability, and hospital visits.

### De-prescribing

De-prescribing is a way for your health care provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, physician's assistant, or pharmacist) to help you safely cut back on the number of medications you take.

### High Risk Medications

As we age we become more sensitive to the side effects of medications. Some medications can cause more harm than good.

- **Anxiety Meds - Benzodiazepines:** e.g. diazepam (Valium®), alprazolam (Xanax®), clonazepam (Klonopin®)
- **Pain Meds - Opioids:** e.g. oxycodone (Roxicodone®, OxyContin®), hydrocodone (Vicodin®, Norco®), hydromorphone (Dilaudid®)
- **Allergy/Urinary Meds - High-anticholinergic medications:** e.g. diphenhydramine (Benadryl®), Oxybutynin (Ditropan®), Hydroxyzine (Atarax®, Vistaril®)
- **Muscle pain/relaxants:** e.g. cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril®), carisoprodol (Soma®), methocarbamol (Robaxin®)
- **All prescription and over-the-counter sedatives and sleep medications:** e.g. zolpidem (Ambien®), Zaleplon (Sonata®), eszopiclone (Lunesta®), Unisom®
- **Tricyclic antidepressants:** e.g. amitriptyline (Elavil®), imipramine (Tofranil®), clomipramine (Anafranil®)
- **Antipsychotics:** e.g. olanzapine (Zyprexa®), quetiapine (Seroquel®)

### What Can You Do?

- Make an appointment with your provider to review your medications each year (or more often if needed).
- Bring all of your medications with you to your appointment (both prescription and over the counter drugs, herbs, vitamins and supplements).
- Ask the provider:
  - If you need to keep taking the medication? Could the dose be reduced?
  - Are there other treatment options?
  - What symptoms should you look for if the medication is stopped?
- Plan on Multiple Visits
  - To be safe and effective, de-prescribing requires ongoing follow up appointments and a commitment from you.
  - Typically one medication is stopped at a time to see how you do. If the response is positive, it may mean that you do not need the drug.