

Deprescribing Factsheet



What is Deprescribing?

Deprescribing is stopping or reducing medicines that are:

- Not helping your condition, or possibly harming you.
- No longer the best treatment for you or your condition.

The goal of deprescribing is to maintain or improve your quality of life.

Deprescribing should only be done by your GP, pharmacist or a nurse.

It is a planned process and some medicines need to be stopped slowly, over time. It is important to follow instructions and not stop any medicines without first talking to your GP, pharmacist or nurse.

All GP practices in Northern Ireland are being asked to consider deprescribing unnecessary, inappropriate or potentially harmful medicines.

My doctor put me on this medicine. Why do they now want to stop it?

The medicine may have been the right thing to use when your doctor first prescribed it for you. However, as we age, our bodies and medical conditions can change, and information for prescribers on how medicines should be prescribed can also change.

This means that some medicines you have been prescribed can become unnecessary or even potentially harmful. What helped our health at one point may now cause harm because of side effects or because the medicine no longer works as it did before.

If this happens, your GP will change your medicine or dose if they feel it is the right thing for you. This can happen with medicines recommended by either GPs or hospital specialists.

Medicines use is a fine balance

Medicines can help us in many different ways. But medicines can also cause us harm. That's why it's important to weigh up the potential benefits and harms of taking a medicine.

Taking more medicines than we need, or taking too many medicines together, can sometimes cause more harm than good and can result in:

- falls and fractures
- hospital admissions
- confusion and memory problems
- car accidents
- premature loss of independence



What do I need to do?

Attend appointments arranged by your GP, Pharmacist or healthcare professional to review your medicines.



Take an up-to-date list of your medicines with you to the appointment

Make a list of any questions you have and bring this to the appointment.

Know your medicines and keep a list, check you are using the right medicine in the right way. If you are unsure, ask your healthcare professional.

How will deprescribing happen?

Deprescribing can happen in a number of ways

Your GP practice may ask you to attend an appointment to discuss your medicines or medical conditions. Some medicines may be changed or stopped during these appointments. You are encouraged to attend these appointments as they will provide you with more information and help you to manage your health.

If new information on a medicine that you are taking becomes available which means that it may no longer be suitable for you, your practice will contact you to discuss possibly deprescribing it.

You can request an appointment with your GP or GP pharmacist to review your medicines at any time. You may want to do this if you have been taking the same medicines for a long time, you think that your medicines are not helping, or you are getting side effects from them.

What are the benefits of deprescribing?

ONLY HARMFUL, INAPPROPRIATE OR UNNECESSARY MEDICINES WILL BE STOPPED

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YOUR TREATMENT WILL BE TAILORED TO YOUR CURRENT NEEDS, NOT TO WHAT YOU NEEDED IN THE PAST

DEPRESCRIBING COULD LEAD TO FEWER SIDE EFFECTS

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DEPRESCRIBING COULD HELP YOU MANAGE YOUR MEDICINES BETTER AS THERE WILL BE FEWER THINGS TO REMEMBER