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## Alternatives for Medications Listed in the AGS Beers Criteria® for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults

For more than 20 years, the American Geriatrics Society (AGS) Beers Criteria® for Potentially Inappropriate Medication Use in Older Adults have been a valuable resource for healthcare providers about the safety of prescribing drugs for older people.

The American Geriatrics Society recently released a list of possible alternative treatments for some of these drugs that appear in the AGS Beers Criteria®.

Some of these alternatives are listed below.

### Key Points

- **Never stop taking a medication without first talking to your healthcare provider,** even if a medication you're taking is listed on the AGS Beers Criteria®.
- **Know about the medications you are taking.** Ask your clinician or pharmacist about the medications you are taking and their potential side effects. If you're experiencing any symptoms, ask if they could be related to a medication you are taking or if it may be a sign of another problem. Use only trusted, reliable sources (such as MedlinePlus) to look up information.
- **Review your medications regularly.** You should regularly review all of the medications you are taking with your clinicians and pharmacists. You should report any problems with your medications, including any side effects, questions you may have about them, or any problems with taking them as prescribed (such as cost). These reviews should occur at least once a year as well as any time a new medication is prescribed.

► **Remember:** potentially inappropriate medications are just that — potentially inappropriate. The AGS Beers Criteria® and the list of alternatives are resources, not a replacement, for the expertise and knowledge of your healthcare provider. The AGS Health in Aging Foundation has developed this resource to help you talk to your healthcare provider about these possible alternatives to the AGS Beers Criteria® medications you're taking.

For more information on potentially inappropriate medication use, please read the [Ten Medications Older Adults Should Avoid or Use with Caution](#) tip sheet.

Instead Of . . .	Possible Alternatives to discuss with your healthcare provider	Patient Resources that may be helpful
<b>Allergy Symptoms</b> <b>First Generation Antihistamines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>chlorpheniramine (AllerChlor)</li> <li>diphenhydramine (Benadryl)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Purified saline nasal rinse (use only sterilized water; do not use tap water)</li> <li>Steroid nasal sprays such as fluticasone (Flonase)</li> <li>Newer antihistamines that are safer such as cetirizine (Zyrtec), fexofenadine (Allegra), or loratadine (Claritin)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How to self-administer nasal sprays—see Figure 4 (BSACI) <a href="https://ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7162111/figure/f4">ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7162111/figure/f4</a></li> <li>Safe use of Neti pots and nasal irrigation devices (FDA) <a href="https://fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/rinsing-your-sinuses-neti-pots-safe">fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/rinsing-your-sinuses-neti-pots-safe</a></li> </ul>
<b>Insomnia</b> <b>"Z-drugs"</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>zolpidem (Ambien)</li> <li>eszopiclone (Lunesta)</li> <li>zaleplon (Sonata)</li> </ul> <b>Benzodiazepines</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>lorazepam (Ativan)</li> <li>alprazolam (Xanax)</li> <li>temazepam (Restoril)</li> <li>other benzodiazepine drugs (ones that end in -zepam or -zolam)</li> </ul> <b>Over-the-Counter</b> sleep aids or cough-and-cold remedies that include diphenhydramine (Benadryl) or other first-generation antihistamines – Tylenol PM, Advil PM	<p>Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for insomnia, a series of methods for calming your mind and helping you fall asleep, can be very helpful. It can be taught by a trained therapist or through self-guided phone apps and websites.</p> <p>Ask your healthcare provider about these and other strategies to improve your sleep without medications.</p>	<p>Digital CBT-I tools. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Insomnia Coach digital CBT-I app (VA) <a href="https://mobile.va.gov/app/insomnia-coach">mobile.va.gov/app/insomnia-coach</a></li> <li>SleepEZ digital CBT-I (VA) <a href="https://veterantraining.va.gov/insomnia">veterantraining.va.gov/insomnia</a></li> <li>Curated list of digital CBT-I and other resources (Sleepwell) <a href="https://mysleepwell.ca/cbti/sleepwell-recommends">mysleepwell.ca/cbti/sleepwell-recommends</a></li> <li>Sleep hygiene recommendations (as a component of CBT-I) (AASM) <a href="https://sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/healthy-sleep-habits/">sleepeducation.org/healthy-sleep/healthy-sleep-habits/</a></li> </ul>
<b>Pain</b> <b>NSAID Pain Medications</b> (for long-term, daily use) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ibuprofen (Motrin)</li> <li>naproxen (Aleve)</li> </ul> <b>Muscle Relaxants</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cyclobenzaprine (Flexeril, Amrix or Fexmid)</li> <li>methocarbamol (Robaxin)</li> </ul>	<p>Your choice of safe and effective treatments depends on the kind of pain you have; talk with your healthcare provider. Depending on the kind of pain, some common alternatives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical therapy, exercise programs, and mindfulness strategies</li> <li>acetaminophen (Tylenol)</li> <li>topical products that contain methyl salicylate (Icy Hot, Ben-Gay)</li> <li>lidocaine cream or patches</li> <li>topical NSAID rubs such as diclofenac gel (Voltaren gel)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Physical activity and self-management education programs for arthritis (CDC) <a href="https://cdc.gov/arthritis/programs/index.html">cdc.gov/arthritis/programs/index.html</a></li> <li>Resources for pain assessment and management (University of Iowa) <a href="https://geriatricpain.org">geriatricpain.org</a></li> <li>Managing osteoarthritis symptoms (NCOA) <a href="https://ncoa.org/article/how-seniors-can-manage-osteoarthritis-symptoms">ncoa.org/article/how-seniors-can-manage-osteoarthritis-symptoms</a></li> <li>Information and resources on physical therapy (APTA) <a href="https://choosept.com/symptoms-conditions">choosept.com/symptoms-conditions</a></li> <li>Risks of and deprescribing of NSAIDs and chronic opioids (EMPOWER) <a href="https://deprescribingnetwork.ca/patient-handouts">deprescribingnetwork.ca/patient-handouts</a></li> </ul>

**NOTE:** This is only a partial list of medications. Medications listed in parentheses are examples of brand names of the generic medications listed.

## Instead Of . . .

## Possible Alternatives

to discuss with your healthcare provider

## Patient Resources

that may be helpful

### Symptoms of Menopause

#### Estrogen Pills and Patches

##### For hot flashes and night sweats:

Ask about behavioral therapies. Other drugs that can be helpful are:

- gabapentin (Neurontin)
- serotonin–norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
- selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)

##### For vaginal dryness:

- non-hormonal vaginal lubricants (Replens, Feminease, K-Y products)
- topical (intravaginal) estrogen creams

- Information and resources (IUA): [yourpelvicfloor.org/conditions/genitourinary-syndrome-of-menopause-gsm](https://yourpelvicfloor.org/conditions/genitourinary-syndrome-of-menopause-gsm)
- Information and resources (AUGS): [voicesforpfd.org](https://voicesforpfd.org)

### Heartburn

#### Proton Pump Inhibitors

(for long-term, daily use)

- omeprazole (Prilosec)
- lansoprazole (Prevacid)
- pantoprazole (Protonix)
- Proton pump inhibitor drugs (ones that end in -prazole)

Ask your healthcare provider if you need to take this medication daily over the long term to protect your stomach. If not, alternative options include:

- Ask your healthcare provider about lifestyle and dietary changes
- Over-the-counter remedies that contain alginate (aka alginic acid)
- As-needed H2 blocker antacids--famotidine (Pepcid) or nizatidine (Axid)

- Information about acid reflux (ACG) [gi.org/topics/acid-reflux](https://gi.org/topics/acid-reflux)
- Infographic (ACG) [webfiles.gi.org/docs/patients/GERD-infographic-final\\_2022.pdf](https://webfiles.gi.org/docs/patients/GERD-infographic-final_2022.pdf)
- Information on heartburn symptoms (My GI Health) [mygi.health/education/symptoms/heartburn](https://mygi.health/education/symptoms/heartburn)
- Information on acid reflux (My GI Health) [mygi.health/education/diseases/acid-reflux](https://mygi.health/education/diseases/acid-reflux)

### Constipation

#### Mineral oil, taken orally

- Schedule toilet visits after meals.
- Add more for movement and exercise.
- Increase foods rich in fiber.
- Drink more clear fluids.
- Consider over-the-counter laxatives containing senna/sennosides, polyethylene glycol, or magnesium

- Information and resources on constipation (ACG) [gi.org/topics/constipation-and-defecation-problems](https://gi.org/topics/constipation-and-defecation-problems)
- Information and resources on constipation (MyGIHealth) [mygi.health/education/symptoms/constipation](https://mygi.health/education/symptoms/constipation)  
[mygi.health/education/diseases/constipation-and-defecation-problems](https://mygi.health/education/diseases/constipation-and-defecation-problems)
- Brief handout on idiopathic constipation (ACG) [webfiles.gi.org/links/patients/Chronic\\_Idiopathic\\_Constipation\\_One-Page\\_based\\_on\\_ACG\\_AGA\\_Guidelines\\_2023.pdf](https://webfiles.gi.org/links/patients/Chronic_Idiopathic_Constipation_One-Page_based_on_ACG_AGA_Guidelines_2023.pdf)