

Psychotropic medicines in Australia

9 May 2024

The **Psychotropic Medicines in Cognitive Disability or Impairment Clinical Care Standard** will improve the care of people with cognitive disability or impairment in all healthcare settings

WHAT ARE PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICINES?

60%

Increase in psychotropic medicines dispensed in Australia within the last 30 years

Psychotropic medicines affect the mind, emotions and behaviour. They include:

- Antipsychotics
- Antidepressants
- Anxiolytics or sedatives

They have an important role in treating mental health problems. They should **only be used as a last resort** to manage behaviours of concern

SPOTLIGHT ON PSYCHOTROPIC USE

In their first 3 months in residential aged care

61%

of people were dispensed **at least one psychotropic** medicine

People with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are

4.5x

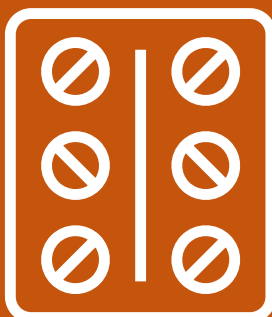
more likely to be currently **taking at least one psychotropic medication** compared with people without ASD

Older people with dementia are

2x

more likely to be **prescribed an antipsychotic** than older people without

HIGH PRESCRIPTION RATES



Prescribed psychotropics

29%

of people with intellectual disability*

35%

of GP patients aged 65+**

RISKS OF PSYCHOTROPICS

22%

higher risk of death
in first 100 days
in aged care with
antipsychotic use

In older people with dementia, some psychotropics can increase the risk of:

- stroke
- pneumonia
- falls
- death

Hospital admissions for medicine-related adverse events due to psychotropic medicines

25%

in people with developmental disorders

3%

in other people

KEY ACTIONS FOR THE USE OF PSYCHOTROPICS



- Prioritise non-medicine strategies for behaviours of concern
- Ensure risks and benefits are discussed and consent is provided
- Only use medicines when there is a clear reason
- Monitor and review medicines regularly
- When there is no benefit – stop the medicines

CONSIDERATIONS WHEN PRESCRIBING APPROPRIATELY

1

What is the expected benefit of the medicine?

2

What are the possible harms and side effects?

3

Do you have informed consent after discussing risks and benefits?

4

When should the medicine be reviewed?

5

What other strategies are recommended?