



Tuesday 23rd September

MEDIA RELEASE

New Guidelines Aim to Reduce Unnecessary Medications in Older Australians

New deprescribing guidelines will help clinicians and older Australians decide when and how to safely reduce or stop medicines.

AUSTRALIA, SEPTEMBER 2025: Every year in Australia, around 250,000 hospitalisations are linked to problems caused by medications, many of which could be avoided. Now, new deprescribing guidelines aim to change that, helping clinicians and older Australians to reduce unnecessary medicines and the risks that come with them. The guidelines encourage people to have informed conversations with their GP or pharmacist about reviewing their medications.

Developed by a team of 72 experts and consumer representatives from across the country, the guidelines fill a long-standing gap in clinical advice by providing clear, structured recommendations for safe deprescribing.

“Many older Australians take multiple medicines. What was once the right treatment may not always remain the best choice. Over time, health conditions, risks and personal goals can change, and for some, certain medicines may start to cause more harm than good,” said lead author and pharmacist Amanda Quek from the University of Western Australia. “These new deprescribing guidelines fill that gap, supporting health professionals and individuals in working together to decide when and how to safely reduce or stop medicines that are no longer needed or may be doing more harm than good.”

The guidelines cover commonly used PBS-subsidised medications for people aged 65 and over, as well as other medications where there is evidence to consider deprescribing in this age group. They also provide plain language summaries for consumers, available at deprescribing.com.

“They will help ensure medicines stay appropriate and aligned with a person’s current health needs, goals, and preferences, potentially reducing medication-related harm, improving quality of life and lowering the treatment burden for those living with multiple conditions,” Ms Quek stated.

This issue affects millions of Australians, and the numbers are striking:

- In the past decade, the number of older Australians taking five or more regular PBS medicines has grown by 32%, from 1.03 million to 1.35 million.
- Around 250,000 hospitalisations each year in Australia are linked to medication problems.
- Pharmacist-led medication reviews detect medicine-related issues in up to 98% of older people, often uncovering multiple problems per person.



The guidelines are relevant to any healthcare professionals involved in prescribing, dispensing, or administering medicines to older people, with pharmacists, GPs, nurses, and allied health professionals working together to support safe deprescribing.

Consumers can take these simple steps to review their medicines:

- Book an appointment with your GP for a medicine review.
- Use the 'brown bag' method, bring all prescription medicines, over-the-counter products, and supplements to the consultation.
- Ask whether any medicines can be reduced or stopped.

The deprescribing guidelines, recently published with RACGP endorsement, were developed by UWA researchers together with more than 70 experts and consumer representatives. They support safe and effective medicine reviews for people aged 65 and older, and are available now at deprescribing.com, along with plain-language summaries for consumers.

Media Kit Available from: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Acsb2mav36EF6gX5-Mc9PBe5P2lfrZNS?usp=sharing>

Interviews and more information are available on request. Please contact amanda@missymischief.com | 0410 570 993

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Additional Information: Q&A with Spokesperson – Amanda Quek, University of Western Australia (on the newly published deprescribing guidelines)

Why were these deprescribing guidelines needed, and what gap do they fill in Australian healthcare?

Many older Australians take multiple medicines, but the right treatment at one point in time may not remain the best option. Until now, there has been little clear guidance on how to safely stop many commonly used medicines in older people. These guidelines fill that gap.

How will these guidelines help older Australians or those living with chronic illness?

They ensure medicines remain appropriate and aligned with a person's health needs, goals, and preferences, while reducing medication-related harm and treatment burden.

Can you share a simple example of when deprescribing might be appropriate?

For example, if a pain medicine was prescribed for short-term use after an injury or surgery, and the pain has resolved, it may be appropriate to stop it.

What should someone do if they want to talk to their GP about reviewing their medications?



Book an appointment with your regular GP and let them know you'd like to review your medicines. One useful approach is the 'brown bag' method, bringing all the medicines you take, including prescriptions, over-the-counter products, and supplements, to the consultation. If desired, ask whether it might be possible to reduce or stop certain medicines.

What role do pharmacists and other healthcare professionals play in implementing these guidelines?

GPs play a central role in coordinating care, while pharmacists use their expertise to collaborate with prescribers in developing safe deprescribing plans. Nurses and other allied health professionals contribute by monitoring symptoms, supporting lifestyle changes, and ensuring that any medication adjustments align with the person's overall care. All health professionals have a responsibility to remain vigilant and work collaboratively to identify and address medication-related issues within their scope of practice.