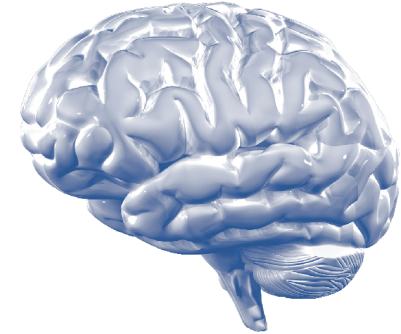


# Medicine, Age, and Your Brain



*A presentation by:*



# Your Body and Brain Can Change with Age

The aging process is normal:

- Your brain's physical structure and abilities change.
- Your circulatory and digestive systems, kidneys, and liver slow down.
- Your body's ability to break down and use medicine changes.



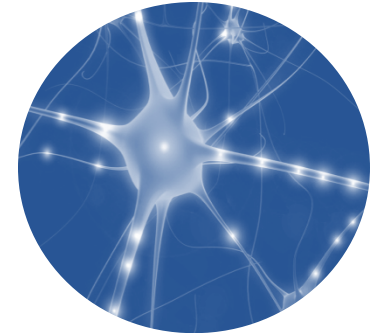
**All of this means your reactions to medicines change, too.**

# Aging and Health Problems

- Aging is linked to multiple health problems.
  - 80% of older adults have at least one chronic health problem
  - 50% have at least two
- Health problems may require medicines that interact with each other in harmful ways.
- Medicines can also interact with food, supplements, natural products, alcohol, or even with another health condition. These interactions can cause problems.
- Some of these medicines and interactions can affect how your brain functions.

# Medicines and Your Brain

- Some reactions to medicines can affect your cognition—your ability to think, understand, learn, plan, and remember.
- Cognitive reactions or side effects can include confusion, memory loss, hallucinations, and delusions.
- Some people mistake cognitive side effects for a form of dementia, like Alzheimer's disease.



# Medicines and Cognitive Side Effects

- The U.S. Institute of Medicine lists some groups of drugs that can harm an older adult's cognition:
  - Antihistamines for allergy relief
  - Anti-anxiety and antidepressant medicines
  - Sleep aids
  - Antipsychotics
  - Muscle relaxants
  - Antimuscarinics to promote control of urination
  - Antispasmodics for relief of cramps in the stomach, intestines, and bladder
- You may need some of these medicines to treat your health problems, or you may be able to use alternatives.



# You Can Help Prevent Cognitive Side Effects

- Discuss your list of medicines—including over-the-counter drugs, vitamins, supplements, and any natural products—with your health care professional.
- Describe any new or existing problems with your cognition, even if you don't think they are related to what you take.
- Your health care provider will use this information to work with you to get the best treatments possible.



**Do not stop taking medicines without talking with your doctor—stopping medicines can be risky.**

# Questions to Ask Your Health Care Professional

- What is the name of this medicine and why am I taking it?
- How should I take this medicine?
- How long will this medicine take to work? When can I stop it?
- Does this medicine have any side effects on my body or brain and when should I call you about them?
- Could this medicine affect my cognition? How can I protect myself against this?
- Can I safely mix this medicine with the remedies, vitamins, natural products and other drugs I take?
- Is there another drug or a non-drug treatment that might be safer or more effective for my body and brain?
- Do I still need to be on all my medicines?

# More Information

- Free Consumer Information from the American Geriatric Society:  
<http://geriatriccareonline.org/ProductAbstract/american-geriatrics-society-updated-beers-criteria-for-potentially-inappropriate-medication-use-in-older-adults/CL001>
  - Note: You must register to get the information.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) webpage on older adults and medicinal side effects: [http://cdc.gov/MedicationSafety/Adult\\_AdverseDrugEvents.html](http://cdc.gov/MedicationSafety/Adult_AdverseDrugEvents.html)
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) guide for older adults:  
<http://fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/ucm163959.htm>
- Institute of Medicine's Consumer Brain Health Guide:  
[https://iom.nationalacademies.org/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2015/Cognitive\\_aging/Action%20Guide%20for%20Individuals%20and%20Families\\_V3.pdf](https://iom.nationalacademies.org/~media/Files/Report%20Files/2015/Cognitive_aging/Action%20Guide%20for%20Individuals%20and%20Families_V3.pdf)
- National Institutes of Health fact sheet on taking medicines safely:
  - English: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/publication/medicines>
  - Spanish: <https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/publicaciones/medicamentos>