



### Anticholinergic Medications

Anticholinergic drugs block the action of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine. A neurotransmitter is a chemical released by nerve cells to send signals to other cells. Acetylcholine is used in transmitting messages that affect muscle contractions in the body, and learning and memory in the brain.

Older people are more sensitive to the anticholinergic effects. Anticholinergic medications are used for a wide range of chronic conditions including urinary incontinence, hay fever, depression, psychosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and Parkinson's disease.

**Where possible, anticholinergic medicines should be avoided in older people.**

### Anticholinergic Drugs Typical Use

Drugs with anticholinergic properties have been used for many decades to treat such diverse conditions as:

- Diarrhea
- Asthma
- Overactive bladder and urinary incontinence
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
- Surgery and anesthesia for muscle relaxation
- Insomnia
- Motion sickness
- Toxicity of certain poisonings
- Parkinson's disease symptoms
- Psychiatric disorders



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