Taking a lot of medications is referred to as “Polypharmacy.” Polypharmacy is very common for nursing home residents.

Deprescribing is a process where a health care provider and patient and/or family to work together to reduce, stop, or slowly reduce medications with the goal of improving patient’s health with less medication.

How does polypharmacy happen? “Sometimes drugs are started to treat a side of effect of another drug. This is called the “prescribing cascade.”

Patient takes **amlodipine** for blood pressure

Side Effect = swelling ankles

- Starts **furosemide** for swelling
  - Side Effect = frequent urination and possible incontinence
  - Starts **oxybutynin** for increased urination
    - Side Effect = dizziness and confusion
  - Patient falls
Taking medications may be necessary for maintaining health and treating symptoms. However, over time, the benefits and risks of certain medications may change.

The risk of harmful effects increases when taking a lot of medications.

As conditions change, some medications can become unnecessary or even harmful because of short-term or long-term side effects, and drug interactions.

Benefits and harms of medications can change over time in a person

Deprescribing:

- Identifies potential medications that can be reduced or discontinued based on your care goals, current level of functioning and life expectancy.
- Provides a way to tailor your medical care to your specific situation and preferences. Ask your medical provider if you are not sure if you still need a medicine. Together you can work to choose a health care plan and medications that are right for you. Overall, your healthcare team wishes to keep you healthy, functional, and comfortably while decreasing risk of harm due to too many medications. Your symptoms control is important to us.

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