



MEDICINES - MAKING DECISIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Making decisions about medicines when you are older is not always straightforward — for you, your doctor, or anyone else involved in your care. At times there will be a clear need for you to take a particular medicine, and the benefits for your health condition will likely outweigh the risk of side effects or other medicine problems. But often the decision is not so clear cut, and the balance of benefits and risks will depend on what is most important to you — including what you want to achieve with your health and wellbeing.

WHAT DO I WANT TO ACHIEVE WITH MY MEDICINES?

Medicines can have different beneficial effects — from relieving your symptoms to extending your life.

What you need to gain from medical treatment should always be considered when you are deciding about medicines. This is always important even when a doctor, carer, or family/whānau member is deciding for you.

Whether you start, stop or continue taking a medicine, or make other changes (e.g. to your dose) will also depend on the risks and benefits of treatment for you.

Your doctor can work with you to help you decide:

- how you want to improve your health and wellbeing
- what benefits or risks there are with your treatment options
- which medicines are likely to benefit or cause you harm.

Find out about other ways that you and your carers can help to prevent medicine problems.

MAKING A DECISION TO TAKE A MEDICINE

'Will it work?' is often one of the main concerns for people who are deciding to take a medicine.

Your decision can also be shaped by your experience of health problems, your personal life, what you want to get from your treatment, and your priorities and values.

Staying active and maintaining quality of life are important considerations too. Worsening health, side effects, and the cost of your medicines may all be factors you will also need to consider.

NPS MedicineWise (2013), [Making decisions about medicines for older people](#).

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