



Contraindicated Medications in Parkinson's Disease

A Guide for Professional Caregivers

Many medications can **worsen Parkinson's symptoms** or interfere with Parkinson's medications. Some drugs block dopamine in the brain, which can significantly increase stiffness, slowness, tremor, confusion, or mobility problems.

Professional caregivers should be aware of medications that may be **contraindicated or require caution** in individuals living with Parkinson's disease.

If these medications are ordered or administered, caregivers should **alert the healthcare team and verify that the prescribing provider is aware of the Parkinson's diagnosis.**

Why Certain Medications Are Problematic in Parkinson's

Parkinson's disease occurs when dopamine-producing cells in the brain are damaged or lost. Many medications that worsen Parkinson's symptoms work by **blocking dopamine receptors.**

When dopamine is further blocked, symptoms such as stiffness, tremor, and slowed movement may become significantly worse.

Some medications can also worsen **confusion, hallucinations, and cognitive changes.**

Common Medications That Should Be Avoided

The following medications are **generally contraindicated in Parkinson's disease** because they block dopamine.

Antipsychotic Medications

Many traditional antipsychotic medications strongly block dopamine and can significantly worsen Parkinson's symptoms.

Examples include:

- Haloperidol (Haldol)
- Fluphenazine (Prolixin)
- Chlorpromazine (Thorazine)
- Thioridazine (Mellaril)

These medications may cause severe rigidity, immobility, or worsening tremor in individuals with Parkinson's.

If treatment for hallucinations or psychosis is needed, providers may consider medications that are safer for Parkinson's, such as **quetiapine, clozapine, or pimavanserin**.

Antiemetics (Nausea Medications)

Some medications used to treat nausea also block dopamine.

Examples include:

- Metoclopramide (Reglan)
- Prochlorperazine (Compazine)
- Promethazine (Phenergan)

These medications can worsen Parkinson's motor symptoms and should generally be avoided.

Safer alternatives may include **ondansetron (Zofran)** when appropriate.

Certain Gastrointestinal Medications

Some medications used to promote stomach emptying also block dopamine.

Example:

- Metoclopramide (Reglan)

This medication is commonly prescribed but can significantly worsen Parkinson's symptoms.

Sedating Medications

Medications that cause sedation can worsen balance, confusion, or fall risk.

Examples include:

- Certain sleep medications
- Benzodiazepines
- Strong sedatives

Professional caregivers should monitor for increased confusion or instability.

WPA Contraindicated Medication List

The **Wisconsin Parkinson Association (WPA)** provides a **list of medications that are contraindicated or should be avoided in Parkinson's disease**.

For safety, this list should be **included in the patient's medical chart or care plan** so that healthcare providers and professional caregivers can quickly reference it when new medications are prescribed.

The list is available on the **WPA website** and can be used as a reference for clinicians, professional caregivers, and care facilities to help prevent medication-related complications.

Important Reminder for Professional Caregivers

If a person living with Parkinson's is prescribed a new medication, caregivers should:

- Confirm that the prescribing provider is aware of the Parkinson's diagnosis
- Monitor for worsening movement symptoms
- Watch for increased confusion or hallucinations
- Report changes to the healthcare team

Medication changes should always be reviewed carefully.

Signs a Medication May Be Causing Problems

Professional caregivers should report if they observe:

- Sudden increase in stiffness or rigidity
- Increased tremor
- Severe slowing of movement
- Difficulty walking or standing
- Increased confusion or hallucinations
- Sudden decline in mobility

These symptoms may indicate that a medication is interfering with Parkinson's treatment.

Supporting Safe Medication Use

Medication safety is essential in Parkinson's care. Professional caregivers can help by:

- Monitoring for symptom changes after new medications
- Communicating concerns promptly
- Ensuring Parkinson's medications are given on time
- Helping coordinate communication between healthcare providers

Careful medication management helps maintain mobility, safety, and quality of life.

Wisconsin Parkinson Association

The **Wisconsin Parkinson Association (WPA)** provides education, resources, and support for professional caregivers, healthcare professionals, and individuals living with Parkinson's.

To learn more about Parkinson's care resources and educational materials, visit:

wiparkinson.org.

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