

[IMAGE]

## Drugged Into Dementia?

By Editorial Staff

Medication use comes with a potential price, no matter the drug; just listen to the laundry list of warnings that accompanies every TV ad for a new product. Here's one you may not have heard – or may not have realized because it's a possibility when taking any number of drugs: Medications may mess with your brain.

We're talking about *dementia* – described by the Alzheimer's Association as "a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life." Alzheimer's disease is the most common dementia, but even memory loss, difficulty understanding things, and problems with communication and language are indicative of dementia.

Now back to the medication issue. According to a large study in *JAMA Internal Medicine*, seniors who take any of several common classes of drugs are more likely to suffer dementia than seniors who don't; and the risk of dementia increases with increased drug exposure. Drug classes positively associated with dementia include anticholinergic antidepressants, antiparkinson drugs, antipsychotic drugs, bladder antimuscarinics, and antiepileptic drugs, per the study.

Considering how many older adults take multiple medications – a growing problem deemed *polypharmacy* – every senior or caretaker of a senior should ensure their doctor answers one important question before filling a prescription: *Do I need to take this drug, or are nondrug alternatives available that are just as effective (and safer)?* It's a question that could save your life or the life of someone you love.

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