

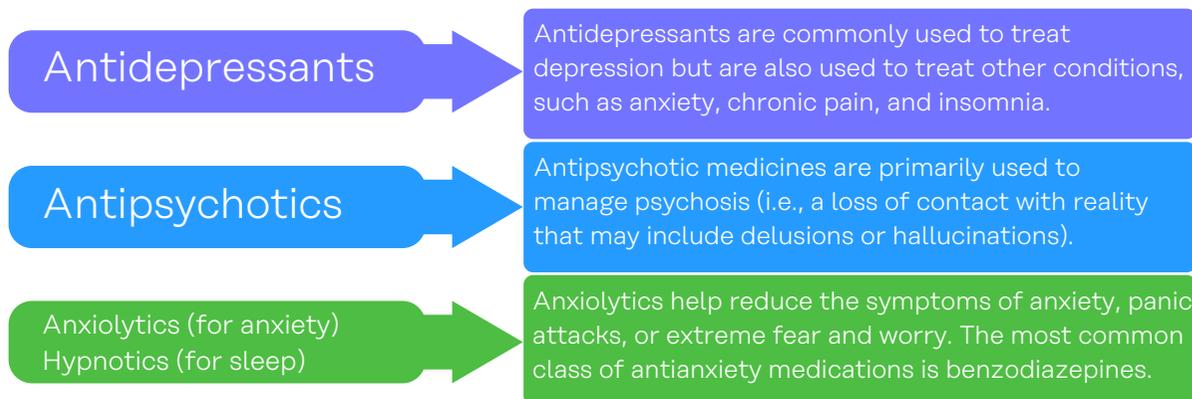
Psychotropic medication is any medication prescribed to stabilize or improve mood, mental status, or behaviour (Kalachnik et al., 1995).

Psychotropic medications are widely prescribed to people living with dementia and in residential aged care. High and variable rates of psychotropic medication use in Australian and international residential aged care is a source of concern.

- When more than one psychotropic agent is used, especially in the elderly, the side effects and risks can be compounded.
- When psychotropic medication is used to manage behaviour, it may be classed as chemical restraint. This is a form of restrictive practice.
 - Restrictive practice is any practice or intervention that has the effect of restricting the rights or freedom of movement of the care recipient.
 - A Behavioural Support Plan (BSP) must be part of the care plan for all residents who show behaviours of concern.
 - oBSPs must be reviewed and updated on a regular basis, and after any change in the resident's circumstances.
- Informed consent must be obtained from the person treated or their decision maker. Consent for medication is governed by State and Territory law.

Psychotropic medication should be monitored for effect and side effects, reviewed after no more than three months and dose reduced and stopped, when possible, with the goal of using the lowest effective dose for the shortest period of time. (Therapeutic Guidelines. Psychotropic. Version 7, 2013)

Three main classes of psychotropics prescribed



Dementia Medications

Because they affect the brain and mind, anti-dementia medication and opioids can also be classed as psychotropic medication.

- Cholinesterase inhibitors work by boosting brain levels of acetylcholine, a chemical messenger involved in memory and judgment (donepezil, galantamine, rivastigmine)
- Memantine works by regulating the activity of glutamate, a chemical messenger involved in brain functions such as learning and memory.

Other medications that are considered to be psychotropics include:

- Anticonvulsant medication, also known as mood stabilisers, are used to treat seizures and some to manage neuropathic pain.
- Lithium Carbonate is given to prevent manic or depressive episodes in bipolar disorder.

Psychotropic Medications in Aged Care: Quick Reference Guide

Antidepressants
The role of antidepressants to treat depression in people with dementia is still uncertain (Dementia Australia, 2016).

Common side effects include:

- Headache and dizziness
- Nausea
- Weight gain
- Anxiety or restlessness
- Difficulty sleeping

- Agomelatine (Valdoxan)
- Amitriptyline (Endep)
- Citalopram (Celapram, Talam, Cipramil)
- Clomipramine (Anafranil)
- Desvenlafaxine (Desfax, Pristiq)
- Dothiepin (Dothep)
- Doxepin (Sinequan, Deptran)
- Duloxetine (Andepra, Drulox, Cymbalta)
- Escitalopram (Cilopam, Lexam, Lexapro)
- Fluoxetine (Zactin, Lovan, Prozac)
- Fluvoxamine (Faverin, Luvox)
- Imipramine (Tofranil)
- Mirtazapine (Mirtazon, Avanza, Axit, Remeron)
- Moclobemide (Aurorix, Amira)
- Nortriptyline (Allegron)
- Paroxetine (Paxtine, Aropax)
- Reboxetine (Edronax)
- Sertraline (Xydep, Eleva, Sertra, Zoloft)
- Venlafaxine (Efexor, Elaxine, Enlafax)
- Vortioxetine (Brintellix)

Antipsychotics
Use in people with dementia increases the risk of stroke and death (RANZCP, 2016).

Common side effects include:

- Excessive sedation
- Movement disorders such as tremor
- Constipation
- Dry mouth
- Infections such as pneumonia

- Aripiprazole (Abilify, Abyraz)
- Chlorpromazine (Largactil)
- Clozapine (Clozaril)
- Haloperidol (Serenace)
- Olanzapine (Zyprexa, Lanzek, Zypine)
- Periciazine (Neulactil)
- Quetiapine (Seroquel, Delucon, Quetia)
- Risperidone (Risperdal, Rispa, Rixadonel)
- Trifluoperazine (Stelazine)
- Ziprasidone (Zeldox)

Anxiolytics (for anxiety) & Hypnotics (sleep)
Often best used intermittently, rather than regularly (Dementia Australia, 2016).

Common side effects include:

- Excessive sedation
- Increased risk of falls (dizziness, confusion, muscle weakness)
- Nausea, dry mouth, blurred vision

- Alprazolam (Kalma, Alprax, Xanax)
- Clonazepam (Paxam, Rivotril)
- Diazepam (Antenex, Valpam, Valium)
- Lorazepam (Ativan)
- Oxazepam (Alebam, Serepax, Murelax)
- Nitrazepam (Alodorm, Mogadon)
- Temazepam (Temtabs, Temaze, Normison)
- Zolpidem (Stildem, Stilnox)
- Zopiclone (Imrest, Imovane)

