

It's your choice. It's your right.

It doesn't matter what age you are or what medical condition you might have – you always have the right to be involved in decisions about your care. This includes decisions about your medication and how you wish to live your life.

While medications can play an important role in helping you to live comfortably, stay safe and live longer, some medications may not work as expected, may make you feel unwell, and may bring on unwanted side effects or changes in behaviour.

You have the right to be provided with information about your medication, including how it works and if there are any potential side effects that may impact on your quality of life.

It is your role to choose if medication is right for you, and everybody involved in your care must respect your rights, as well as your values and preferences.



Remember, it is your right to have control over your medication.



Ray's story

Ray returned to his aged care facility after a surgery. His daughter Susan noticed he'd been prescribed a new medication and recalled the changes she saw in Ray:

"At that stage he couldn't walk, only shuffle, he was very, very depressed, just crying all the time. And he couldn't swallow... He would say, 'My mind is a hell to me.' He wouldn't be engaged in a conversation."

Susan was extremely disturbed by the changes with her father, but she was unable to convince the nursing staff to stop giving him the drug. She decided to move him to a new facility, where he immediately began to wean off the medication.

Susan described the change:

"Now, he's very, very much like his old self. He's Irish, with a thick Irish accent, and he's hilarious. He's very funny. He likes to just go out and have lunch. We'll often take a picnic. We'll go for walks on the beach. If there's music on in a pub, we'll go in the afternoon, when he's not too tired."

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Medication: It's Your Choice

How much do you know about your medication? Did you know that what you take is your choice and that you have control?

This brochure equips you with the ability to have an informed and active role in your decisions about what medications you take.

Supported by funding from the Australian Government



For more information:
Call 1800 700 600 or
opan.pub/06

OPAN member organisations by state or territory:

ACT	TAS	VIC
 ADACAS Advocacy	 Advocacy Tasmania	 Elder Rights Advocacy <small>Supporting your right to quality care</small>
NSW	NT – Top End	NT – Central
 Seniors Rights Service	 Darwin Community LEGAL SERVICE	 CatholicCare NT
QLD	SA	WA
 ADA Australia <small>Your aged and disability advocates</small>	 aras <small>aged rights advocacy service inc.</small>	 Advocare <small>Empowering People</small>

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What is an informed choice?

An informed choice is when you make a decision about your medical care, or the care of your loved one, with the knowledge and understanding of the benefits and potential risks involved.

It is both your right and your role to choose which option is right for you, or for the person you care for, and to commence or discontinue a medication. You can say 'no' and choose not to take a medication. You can also change your mind at any time, even after you have started to take a medication.

Who is my decision-maker?

- ★ There are times when you may want to seek help and support from others to make a decision about your treatment options.
- ★ There are other times when you may need someone you trust to make that decision for you, based on your values and preferences, and what you would want.
- ★ You can choose who will speak for you. Your supporter or substitute decision-maker may be a family member, carer, friend, representative or support person – it should be someone you trust.
- ★ For more information, read the full booklet at opan.org.au/yourchoice

Medications to be aware of.

Some medications can change thoughts or behaviour, or have an impact on your day to day life. These medications are called psychotropics, but they can be known by many other names.

These have often been overused in Australia amongst older people and can have serious side effects. It's important that you understand what these medications are, why you might take them and how they may affect your ability to make decisions.

When should I take these medications?

These medications are intended to help treat mental health conditions such as depression. However, sometimes they are given to control the behaviour of a person. When they are used for this purpose it is called chemical restraint.

There will be instances when these medications are appropriate for the person's medical condition, such as when they're experiencing severe agitation and aggression, which may put them at risk of harm.

When you are taking these medications, they should be monitored closely and reviewed on a regular basis.

Questions to ask about your medication.

Next time you visit your GP, take this list of questions with you. These questions are also helpful for reviewing medication that you're taking.

- ★ What am I taking?
- ★ How should it help me?
- ★ What are the side effects?
- ★ What could happen if I don't take it?
- ★ What are the alternatives (including non-medication alternatives)?
- ★ When can my medication be reviewed?

Help is available.

For further support:

1. You can ask for an appointment with your doctor, or ask for a specialist review or second opinion.
2. If you are receiving clinical home care or you are in an aged care home, you can formally request a case conference or a medication review with your provider.
3. You can reach out for free and independent support by contacting OPAN, the Older Persons Advocacy Network on 1800 700 600 or by visiting opan.org.au
4. Or, you can raise a complaint with the Aged Care Quality & Safety Commission by calling 1800 951 822 or online at agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint

For more information, and for further resources on older people and medications, visit OPAN at opan.org.au or call 1800 700 600.

Are there alternatives to medication?

There are often alternative treatment options that may be more effective than medication in supporting you. For more information, read the full booklet at opan.org.au/yourchoice

