



Australian Prescriber



AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW

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EVERYDAY DRUGS CAN DAMAGE KIDNEYS

Our kidneys are exposed to many medications. Everybody, particularly older people or those with medical conditions such as diabetes or heart disease, is at risk of suffering adverse effects from some commonly used medicines, according to the current issue of *Australian Prescriber*.

Commonly prescribed medicines which can affect the kidneys include some treatments for blood pressure, arthritis and depression.

Medicines such as diuretics for blood pressure can cause a fall in blood volume. This reduces the flow of blood through the kidneys and may impair their function.

The non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, which are often used for arthritis, reduce filtering by the kidneys. This can cause fluid retention, with the risk of increasing heart failure and reducing the effectiveness of treatment for high blood pressure.

Aminoglycoside antibiotics are a relatively common cause of acute deterioration in kidney function. They have the potential to cause significant illness and even death because of a toxic side effect.

Painkillers are known to cause problems if too many have been taken for too long. Although the problem is less prevalent now than 20 years ago, it can be difficult to detect, as symptoms are often non-specific and patients may be reluctant to admit to taking too many painkillers.

Computer access to relevant medical literature is increasing, so it is wise for health professionals to check the list of precautions and adverse effects before prescribing for these vulnerable patients.

Further information: Dr John Knight for the Australian Kidney Foundation 0414 614 189

The current issue of *Australian Prescriber* also looks at medical predictions for the new millennium, and improvements in wound management.

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