


# REDUCING UNNECESSARY MEDICINES

Taking fewer medicines can have major benefits for both health and the environment. It reduces the risk of drug interactions and side effects while also limiting pharmaceutical residues that contaminate ecosystems, particularly rivers and lakes.<sup>1</sup> By questioning each prescription, we can improve quality of life and care while also helping to protect the environment.

**34%**  
of Swiss insured persons over 65 years received a potentially inappropriate prescription in 2019.<sup>2</sup>

**32 000**  
hospitalizations per year in Switzerland are due to adverse drug reactions.<sup>3</sup>

**60 tons**  
of medications have been found in Lake Geneva, Switzerland.

 The **environmental impact of medication production and consumption is equivalent to that of land transport**, based on evaluations in some European countries (France, UK).

**How to reduce medicine use ?**  
The example of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), commonly used to **reduce fever, inflammation, and pain**.

## GOOD TO KNOW

To relieve pain, **non-drug alternatives** exist: **physiotherapy, hot/cold applications, osteopathy, acupuncture, and (self-)hypnosis**.<sup>4</sup>

## BENEFITS FOR HEALTH

Reducing NSAID use helps prevent their side effects: **stomach pain, cardiovascular issues, and kidney problems**.<sup>5</sup>

NSAIDs interact with many medications (e.g., **anticoagulants, antidepressants**), either enhancing or reducing their effects.<sup>5</sup> Reducing their use helps **avoid these undesirable interactions**.

## BENEFITS FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Reducing NSAID consumption **helps protect wildlife**, since these medicines can harm the livers of fish and contribute to the decline of birds of prey by affecting their kidneys.<sup>1</sup>

Lower medication consumption reduces **water pollution and prevents waste**.<sup>1</sup>

## THE SUSTAINABLE PRESCRIPTION

◆ Avoid unnecessary prescriptions.  
◆ Reevaluate each prescription.  
◆ Consider non-drug alternatives.  
◆ For physicians: Use Smarter Medicine recommendations ([www.smartermedicine.ch](http://www.smartermedicine.ch)) and START/STOP criteria.<sup>6</sup>

### When to discuss de-prescription or NSAID reduction ?

During **each prescription renewal** or **when introducing a new medication**.  
For NSAIDs: particularly in cases of **chronic and/or acute pain**, during **consultations for flu-like symptoms or viral infections**.



### REFERENCES

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