

Anticholinergic Burden

What it means and why we review it

A short guide from your Primary Care Network

Some medicines can affect your brain

Many common medicines — including some for allergies, bladder problems, depression and pain — can have a side effect of blocking signals in your brain.

On their own, each medicine may seem fine. But when you take **several of these medicines together**, their effects **add up**.

What is an ACB score?

ACB stands for **Anticholinergic Burden**. It is a score that adds up the effect of all these medicines together. Each medicine is given a score of 1, 2 or 3 depending on its strength. Your doctor or pharmacist adds these up to find your **total ACB score**.

Score 1 or 2	Score 3	Score 4+
Lower burden. Keep an eye on it.	Worth reviewing with your doctor.	Important to review soon.

What problems can a high score cause?

If your total score is **3 or above**, you may be more likely to experience:

- Memory problems or confusion
- Dizziness and falls
- Drowsiness
- Dry mouth or constipation
- Blurred vision

These effects can build up slowly and may be mistaken for other conditions or simply "getting older".

What can be done about it?

A **medicines review** with your GP or pharmacist can help. They will look at everything you take and check whether:

- each medicine is still needed
- a lower-risk alternative is available
- a dose could safely be reduced

This does not mean all your medicines will be stopped. The aim is simply to make sure the total effect is right for you.

Could my medicines be causing side effects?

Medicines can sometimes cause side effects — and there may be more than one cause.

It is always worth asking your **doctor or pharmacist** to check whether your medicines could be contributing to any symptoms you are experiencing.

Some medicines that can add to your score

You may recognise some of these:

Amitriptyline — used for pain, low mood or seizures

Oxybutynin — used for bladder problems

Chlorphenamine — an antihistamine — e.g. Piriton

Promethazine — used for sickness or sleep

This is not a complete list. Your pharmacist can check your full medicines list.

If you are worried about your medicines, please speak to your **GP, practice pharmacist or care home nurse**. They are there to help.

For queries about this leaflet, contact: **A von Hirschberg, PCN Care Home Pharmacist** — northshropshirepcn.co.uk/our-services/care-homes