

To prepare for the NCLEX exam, nursing students should be familiar with various gastrointestinal (GI) medications, their uses, side effects, nursing considerations, and patient education. Here are some common GI medications and key facts about them:

Antacids

- Examples: Calcium carbonate (Tums), magnesium hydroxide (Milk of Magnesia), aluminum hydroxide.
- Uses: Neutralize stomach acid, relieve symptoms of heartburn, indigestion.
- Side Effects: Constipation (aluminum, calcium), diarrhea (magnesium), electrolyte imbalances.
- Nursing Considerations: Assess for renal function (magnesium and aluminum can accumulate in renal impairment), administer separate from other medications (antacids can affect absorption).

Proton Pump Inhibitors (PPIs)

- Examples: Omeprazole (Prilosec), lansoprazole (Prevacid), pantoprazole (Protonix).
- Uses: Decrease stomach acid production, treat GERD, peptic ulcers.
- Side Effects: Headache, nausea, diarrhea, increased risk of fractures (long-term use), Clostridium difficile infection.
- Nursing Considerations: Administer before meals, monitor for signs of GI bleeding, educate patients about potential long-term risks.

H2 Receptor Antagonists

- Examples: Ranitidine (Zantac), famotidine (Pepcid), cimetidine (Tagamet).
- Uses: Reduce stomach acid production, treat GERD, peptic ulcers.
- Side Effects: Headache, dizziness, constipation or diarrhea, confusion (especially in elderly patients).
- Nursing Considerations: Administer with or without food, monitor for improvement in symptoms, educate patients about potential side effects.

Anti-emetics

- Examples: Ondansetron (Zofran), metoclopramide (Reglan), promethazine (Phenergan).
- Uses: Prevent and treat nausea and vomiting.

- Side Effects: Drowsiness, dizziness, headache, constipation, extrapyramidal symptoms (metoclopramide).
- Nursing Considerations: Assess for effectiveness, monitor for side effects, educate patients about avoiding hazardous activities if drowsy.

Laxatives

- Examples: Psyllium (Metamucil), docusate sodium (Colace), bisacodyl (Dulcolax), polyethylene glycol (Miralax).
- Uses: Treat constipation, promote bowel movements.
- Side Effects: Abdominal cramping, diarrhea, electrolyte imbalances (with overuse).
- Nursing Considerations: Encourage adequate fluid intake, assess bowel patterns, educate patients about the appropriate use of laxatives.

Antidiarrheals

- Examples: Loperamide (Imodium), bismuth subsalicylate (Pepto-Bismol).
- Uses: Treat diarrhea, reduce frequency of bowel movements.
- Side Effects: Constipation, dizziness, dry mouth.
- Nursing Considerations: Monitor for dehydration, assess bowel movements, educate patients about not using for prolonged periods without medical advice.

Antispasmodics

- Examples: Dicyclomine (Bentyl), hyoscyamine (Levsin).
- Uses: Relieve muscle spasms in the GI tract, treat IBS symptoms.
- Side Effects: Dry mouth, dizziness, blurred vision, constipation.
- Nursing Considerations: Monitor for anticholinergic effects, educate patients about managing dry mouth and avoiding activities requiring alertness if dizzy.

Prokinetics

- Examples: Metoclopramide (Reglan).
- Uses: Increase GI motility, treat GERD, gastroparesis.
- Side Effects: Drowsiness, fatigue, extrapyramidal symptoms, diarrhea.

- Nursing Considerations: Monitor for signs of tardive dyskinesia, assess GI symptoms, educate patients about potential side effects.

Key Concepts for NCLEX Preparation

- Mechanism of Action: Understand how each class of medication works in the body.

- Indications: Know the common conditions treated with these medications.

- Side Effects: Be aware of common and serious side effects.

- Nursing Considerations: Learn about monitoring, patient education, and special considerations for each medication.

- Patient Education: Be prepared to teach patients about medication use, side effects, and lifestyle modifications to manage GI conditions.

Focusing on these aspects will help nursing students prepare effectively for the NCLEX exam.