

Where to Turn for Help . . . If You or Someone You Care for Has an Alcohol Problem

Alcoholics Anonymous

- One-third of members are over 50 years of age.

Al-Anon

- For family members of people with alcohol problems.

Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Centers

- Check the Yellow Pages. Look under “Alcoholism Information and Treatment Centers.”

Other Community Resources

- Clergy
- Doctors
- Social Workers

 **PARKE-DAVIS**
A Warner-Lambert Division

Published by the University of Maryland School of Pharmacy through a grant from Parke-Davis. Produced by the University of Maryland Office of Publications.

PD-99-BK-3394-B1 (089)

904377

Alcohol: Friend or Foe?



THE PETER LAMY CENTER
for Drug Therapy and Aging

Alcohol Facts

Alcohol Is a Potent Drug

- It affects most organs of the body.
- Even a “couple of drinks” can cause alcohol toxicity.
- Alcohol can worsen some medical conditions.
- Older adults are more sensitive to effects of alcohol than younger adults.
- Alcohol interacts with many medicines.
- Alcohol use makes it difficult to remember things—like taking medicines correctly.
- Alcohol is high in calories but low in nutrients.

Alcohol Use in Older Adults

- Guidelines recommend not to exceed one 5 oz. glass of wine, one 12 oz. beer, or 1.5 oz. of 80 proof distilled spirits per day.
- Drinking problems may be overlooked in older adults.
- You don’t have to drink every day to have a problem with alcohol.
- Alcohol abuse is as common in older adults as in younger adults.

In Small, Controlled Amounts Alcohol May...

- lower the risk of heart disease.
- increase appetite.
- help people socialize.

Health and Alcohol Use

The Body

Mental

- Depression
- Memory loss
- Poor judgment
- Sleep disturbance
- Behavior changes

Heart and Circulation

- Disease of heart muscle
- High blood pressure
- Stroke

Digestive

- Stomach bleeding
- Mouth and throat damage or cancer
- Bowel problems

Reflexes and Balance

- Falls
- Driving impairment

Others

- Liver disease
- Increased risk of cancer
- Anemia
- Infections
- Cold intolerance

Take Note

If you are used to drinking alcohol and you suddenly quit, you may experience serious medical complications. Talk to a health professional or counselor about quitting safely.

Be sure to talk to your doctor about alcohol use with any condition you may have.

Medicines and Alcohol

Medicines

For Depression, Sleep, or Nerves

- Dizziness
- Daytime sedation
- Confusion
- Falling
- Depression
- Stomach upset

For Cough and Colds or Infections

- Dizziness, sedation
- Confusion
- Stomach Upset

For Diabetes

- Low blood sugar reaction
- Poor diabetes control

For Seizures

- Increased seizures
- Increased falls, confusion, sedation
- Stomach upset

For Pain Relievers

- Stomach upset
- Confusion, sedation
- Falls, poor balance

For Blood Thinners

- Increased risk of bleeding
- Increased risk of blood clot

Take Note

Mixing alcohol with medicines, even when taken hours apart, can increase the effects of medicines.