



KNOW YOUR LIMIT

How Many is Too Many?

What counts as one drink, and how many can an older adult have? An older adult should have **NO MORE** than 7 drinks a week, and **NO MORE** than 3 drinks in a day. And when they are drinking, **NO MORE** than one alcoholic drink per hour. One drink is equal to:

- One 12 ounce bottle/can of beer or wine cooler.
- One 8 to 9 ounce bottle/can of malt liquor.
- One 5 ounce glass of wine.
- One 1.5 ounce shot of hard liquor (spirits), 80 proof. Examples of spirits are whiskey, gin, vodka and rum.

Depending on your health, it may be better to not drink at all, especially if you're taking medications.

TIPS TO LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE

- Remove all alcohol from your home. Only drink during special occasions.
- Avoid drinking when you're upset or angry.
- Don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Sip alcoholic drinks slowly, and try to alternate alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic beverages.
- Politely say "no thanks" when offered a drink if you've hit your limit.



SOBERING UP!

Getting Help

If you, or someone you know, has a problem with alcohol, don't worry, it's not too late to get help. Talk with family and friends, or with a counselor who deals with alcohol problems. Try to stay away from places you used to drink or people you used to drink with. There are many support groups for older adults with alcohol problems, like Alcoholics Anonymous (www.aa.org). Call your doctor or a senior center near you to find places that can help.

ALCOHOL

& Older Adults



STAY SAFE SERIES

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Know the Risks

GETTING OLDER

Alcohol's Affect

When you were in your mid-30's, drinking didn't affect you the same way it does now. Lately, when you drink even one beer, you already feel a little tipsy. Your words begin to slur and you get tired so easily. So, what's going on?

As people age, alcohol may begin to affect their bodies and minds differently than when they were younger, and they can develop a problem with alcohol.

So why does alcohol affect us differently as we get older?

As we age, alcohol is metabolized, or broken down, more slowly, which means that the alcohol stays in our bodies longer. This means that just one drink can produce high blood alcohol concentration, especially in women, because they have less water in their bodies to metabolize the alcohol.

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND CAREGIVERS

What You Can Do to Help

It's not that easy to talk to someone about their drinking problem, especially an older adult. Try to involve other friends or family members so you're not alone. Let your loved one know that you are worried about them. Share some facts about the negative effects alcohol can have on older adults, and offer to go with them to see their doctor. Suggest other things they can do that don't include drinking. Try to encourage them to seek counseling or attend group meetings. Most importantly, let them know that you will support them during the entire process.



ALREADY HAVE HEALTH CONCERNS?

Alcohol Makes Things Worse

Older adults may turn to alcohol to help them cope with their problems, like money, loss of loved ones/friends, a change in their living situation or declining health. But heavy drinking can worsen health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, ulcers and osteoporosis.

Drinking when you're older also comes with some safety risks. For older adults, even small amounts of alcohol consumption increase the risk for falls, car crashes and accidents at home. These can all lead to injuries like hip or leg fractures, and in extreme cases, even death. Most older people who fracture a hip never return to the level they were at before the fracture. Alcohol is a factor in 40% of fatal car crashes, suicides and fatal falls.

Heavy drinking can also lead to even more health & safety concerns, such as:

- Stroke
- Mood disorders
- Poor coordination
- Memory loss
- Organ damage
- Impaired judgment



ALCOHOL AND MEDICINES

They Don't Play Well Together!

When mixed with alcohol, many prescriptions, over-the-counter medicines and even herbal remedies can become very dangerous, leading to increased illness, injury or death. Some side effects of mixing alcohol and medications are:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Headaches
- Drowsiness
- Fainting
- Loss of coordination
- Internal bleeding
- Heart problems
- Difficulty breathing
- Death



Also, alcohol can make the medications you are taking less effective and even useless. In some cases, alcohol can make the medication toxic to your body. Here's some examples:

- If you drink alcohol while taking cold or allergy medicines, you can become very sleepy.
- Drinking alcohol after you've taken aspirin raises the chance for internal bleeding.
- Some medications like cough syrups and laxatives already have high amounts of alcohol in them.
- Alcohol mixed with large doses of painkillers (acetaminophen) can damage your liver.
- Mixing alcohol with pain pills, sleeping pills or depression medicines can be deadly for an older adult.