

Fast Facts

- Alcohol is the drug of choice for older adults
- Alcohol can cause forgetfulness and confusion - these symptoms could be mistaken for Alzheimer's
- Alcohol is the third leading *preventable* cause of death in the United States

More info available from [NIH](#)

Drinking & Medications

Many medicines—prescription, over-the-counter, or herbal remedies—can be dangerous or even deadly when mixed with alcohol. This includes:

- Aspirin
- Acetaminophen
- Cold and allergy medicine
- Cough syrup
- Sleeping pills
- Pain medication (opioids)
- Anxiety or depression medicine

More info available from [NIA](#)

How Alcohol Effects Safety

Drinking even a small amount of alcohol can lead to dangerous or even deadly situations. Drinking can impair a person's judgment, coordination, and reaction time. This increases the risk of household accidents, and car crashes. In older adults, too much alcohol can lead to balance problems and falls, which can result in fractures and other injuries. Studies show that the rate of hip fractures in older adults increases with alcohol use.

More info available from [NIA](#)

As a person ages, the metabolism of alcohol slows, causing them to feel the effects more quickly and alcohol to remain in their system longer. Combining metabolism changes with the likelihood that older adults take one or more medications daily, they are at greater risk for adverse interaction with alcohol use.

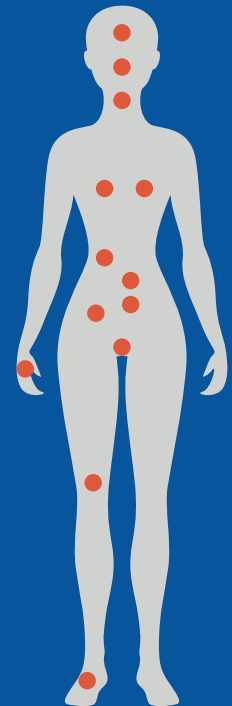
(NIH, Spring 2014 Issue: Volume 9)

Increased Health Problems

Alcohol is a risk factor for many chronic diseases and conditions. Alcohol use has the potential to affect treatment outcomes and mortality.

Common health problems in older adults that can be negatively impacted by heavy alcohol consumption include:

- High blood pressure
- Congestive heart failure
- Diabetes
- Liver problems
- Osteoporosis
- Memory problems
- Mood disorders



Even within recommended limits alcohol can create or exacerbate health problems. Providing health education to patients can help initiate impactful change. Patients considering change may benefit from discussion of harm reduction strategies to continue shaping healthy habits.

More info on harm reduction available [here](#)

Alcohol affects almost every organ in the body.