

Where Find Help

LOCALLY

Lifespan's Geriatric Addictions Program

1900 S. Clinton Ave.

585-244-8400

www.lifespanrochester.org

Alcoholics Anonymous, Rochester Chapter

585-232-6720

Al-Anon, Rochester Chapter

585-288-0540

National Council on Alcoholism and Drug
Dependence-Rochester Area (NCADD-RA)

585-719-3481 or 585-719-3484

www.ncadd-ra.org

Resources, Advocacy & Research

[https://ncadd-ra.org/news-resources](https://ncadd-ra.org/news-resources/resources-advocacy-research)

[/resources-advocacy-research](https://ncadd-ra.org/news-resources/resources-advocacy-research)

NATIONALLY:

SAMHSA's National Helpline

1-800-662-HELP (4357) is a confidential, free,

24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information

service, in English and Spanish. This service

provides referrals to local treatment facilities,

support groups, and community-based

organizations. www.samhsa.gov



GERIATRIC ADDICTIONS PROGRAM

1900 South Clinton Avenue

Rochester, NY 14618

585-244-8400

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Alcohol & Prescription Medications Don't Mix



Older Adults & Substance Misuse



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Older Adults 60+ and Responsible Drinking

- ▶ Avoid consuming alcohol immediately prior to bedtime to avoid sleep disturbances. Never combine alcohol with medication (including over-the-counter sleep aids).
- ▶ Abstain if you're taking any psychiatric medications, pain relievers, blood thinners, diabetic drugs and some cardiovascular drugs.
- ▶ Consider one drink per day a safe level if you take no medications that interact with alcohol. Please see chart in this brochure to assess your medications.

WHO SHOULD NEVER DRINK ALCOHOL

- ▶ People with memory problems
- ▶ People with a history of falls or unsteady walking

The information in this brochure is not intended as medical advice. Always consult your physician if you have questions on these, or any other medical topics.

Alcohol Misuse by Older Adults is at Epidemic Levels.

Currently a minimum of 18% of older adults 60+ who consume alcohol suffer health consequences. This also pertains to social drinking through excessive use. There is a dire need to provide updated education to families, caregivers, medical and mental health professionals concerning the signs and symptoms of misuse. This current lack of education is resulting in needless health issues and a lowered quality of life for older adults.

People are living longer. Aging causes our metabolism to slow down. The same amount of alcohol that may have minimally impacted one's health and functioning earlier in life can now be toxic. With alcohol taking longer to leave the body, every major organ can be negatively impacted.

Alcohol use can accelerate the progression of chronic disease especially heart disease and diabetes.

Alcohol use can mask signs and symptoms of mental health problems. Older adults often use alcohol to ease anxiety, ward off feelings of depression, and to help with insomnia.

Being diagnosed with dementia is now of great concern for aging adults. Symptoms of alcohol misuse can mask signs and symptoms of dementia making detection difficult. It's never good to assume, "If they'd only stop drinking, their memory would improve."

There's a critical lack of education surrounding the use of prescription medication and alcohol use. People mistakenly think that as long as they're not swallowing their medication with alcohol, there's no problem. The reality is alcohol introduced at any time, regardless of when a pill is taken, can result in risky health consequences. Please refer to the chart in this pamphlet to make sure you're not at risk for a medical crisis.

Don't be afraid to bring any concerns regarding your alcohol use to your family physician, pharmacist or contact Lifespan's Geriatric Addictions Program at 585-244-8400.

Effects of Alcohol on the Body

- ▶ Gastritis, ulcers, heartburn
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Anemia
- ▶ Increased risk of stroke
- ▶ Increased blood pressure
- ▶ Increased risk of hemorrhage
- ▶ Malnutrition
- ▶ Pancreatitis
- ▶ Calcium loss
- ▶ Decrease in muscle strength
- ▶ Inflammation
- ▶ Dermatitis

Problems with Alcohol and Medication Misuse are Hard to Detect

- ▶ Symptoms can mimic other diseases
- ▶ Medical professionals don't always screen for the use of alcohol with medications
- ▶ Limited access to health care due to insurance coverage
- ▶ Lack of education among older adults on medication interactions
- ▶ Denial of any problem by the older adult
- ▶ Mental health conditions
- ▶ Social isolation

Many older adults don't realize that mixing alcohol and medications inappropriately can be a problem until they've grown dependent on either substance or both.

DRUG CATEGORIES & ALCOHOL POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

Allergy Medicine: Benadryl (diphenhydramine), Claritin (loratadine), Zyrtec (cetirizine), Allegra (fexofenadine), Atarax (hydroxyzine) + Alcohol = Increased dizziness, drowsiness, decreased central nervous system functioning.

Anti-Anxiety: Xanax (alprazolam), Ativan (lorazepam), Buspar (buspirone), Valium (diazepam), Klonopin (clonazepam), Librium (chlordiazepoxide) + Alcohol = Excessive drowsiness, loss of balance and coordination, decreased motor skills, breathing difficulties, loss of consciousness, death.

Antidepressants: Zoloft (sertraline), Prozac (fluoxetine), Celexa (citalopram), Lexapro (escitalopram), Paxil (paroxetine), Luvox (fluvoxamine), Cymbalta (duloxetine) + Alcohol = Poor control of depression, increased risk of overdose, dizziness.

Arthritis: Mobic (meloxicam), Naprosyn (naproxen), Voltaren (diclofenac), Celebrex (celecoxib) + Alcohol = Increased risk of stomach bleeding and ulcers, liver damage.

Blood Pressure Medication/Water Pills: Zestril (lisinopril), Tenormin (atenolol), Lotensin (benazepril), Vaseretic (enalapril), Norvasc (amlodipine), Microzide (hydrochlorothiazide), Cozaar (losartan), Diovan (valsartan) + Alcohol = Dizziness, fainting, increased risk of falls, changes in heart rhythm, decreased effectiveness of treatment.

Blood Thinners: Coumadin (warfarin), Eliquis (apixaban), Pradaxa (dabigatran), Xarelto (rivaroxaban) + Alcohol = Increased risk for both new clots and bleeding. (Please note that over-the-counter aspirin + alcohol = increased risk of stomach bleeding.)

Cholesterol: Lipitor (atorvastatin), Crestor (rosuvastatin), Altacor (lovastatin), Pravachol (pravastatin), Zocor (simvastatin), Niacin + Alcohol = Increased risk of liver damage, increased flushing and itching with niacin.

Diabetes: Glucophage (metformin), Glucotrol (glipizide), Micronase (glyburide), Insulin + Alcohol = Very low blood sugar levels, increased risk of falls, flushing, nausea/vomiting/headache.

Heart Medicine: Lanoxin (digoxin), Lopressor/Toprol XL (metoprolol, Inderal (propranolol) + Alcohol = Increased risk of falls, dizziness, changes in effectiveness of treatment. (Please note that over-the-counter aspirin + alcohol = increased risk of stomach bleeding.)

Herbal Supplements: Despite being natural, certain herbs can have dangerous side effects when mixed with some prescription medications and/or alcohol. ALWAYS check with your pharmacist before taking any herbs.

Over the Counter Pain Killers: Tylenol (acetaminophen), Aspirin, Aleve (naproxen), Advil, Motrin (ibuprofen) + Alcohol = increased risk of stomach bleeding, stomach ulcers, liver damage.

Prescription Pain Medication: Lyrica (pregabalin), Codeine, Duragesic (fentanyl), Zohydro ER (hydrocodone), Vicodin, Lorcet (hydrocodone/acetaminophen), Dilaudid (hydromorphone), Demerol (meperidine), Methadone (dolophine), MS Contin (morphine), OxyContin (oxycodone HCL), Percocet (oxycodone/acetaminophen) + Alcohol = Difficulty breathing/drowsiness can lead to coma or death, increased risk of falls, poor motor function, high potential for abuse/addiction.

Prostate: Cardura (doxazosin), Minipress (prazosin), Flomax (tamsulosin) + Alcohol = Increased risk of falls, fainting, lightheadedness.

Seizures: Keppra (levetiracetam) Dilantin (phenytoin), Ativan (lorazepam), Valium (diazepam), Phenobarbital, Tegretol (carbamazepine), Neurontin (gabapentin) + Alcohol = Increased risk of seizures.

Sleep Aids: Ambien (zolpidem), Lunesta (eszopiclone), Restoril (temazepam), Unisom (doxylamine), Benadryl (diphenhydramine) + Alcohol = Dizziness, difficulty breathing, memory problems, decreased functioning. (Please note even natural sleep supplements (e.g. melatonin) can have as serious side effects as those above as well as increased anxiety, swelling of the feet/hands, redness in the face.)

Managing Multiple Medications

ALWAYS

- ▶ Question your doctor or pharmacist about prescription dosages if you don't understand the instructions.
- ▶ Use one pharmacy for all prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.
- ▶ Make a medication record including ALL non-prescription medicines and herbal supplements.
- ▶ Carry the list with you to show your doctor and pharmacist.
- ▶ Take medications as prescribed.

NEVER

- ▶ Take more or less of your prescriptions without letting your doctor know.
- ▶ Refuse to have a prescription filled because "it's too expensive" without letting your doctor know.
- ▶ Take herbs or over-the-counter medicines without first consulting your doctor or pharmacist.
- ▶ Share prescriptions with family or friends.
- ▶ Store unused medications for use the next time you have similar symptoms.