

Signs that an elderly person is in danger from alcohol may include :

- Isolation and /or withdrawal from family, friends or neighbors
- Drinking to relieve pain or stress
- Disorientation or lapses of memory which may occur during or after drinking alcohol
- Frequent falls, burns, bruises or accidents
- Weight loss, swelling of ankles abdomen or hands
- Medical problems such as ulcers hepatitis, heart problem or high blood pressure

Alcohol problems are Treatable with :

- ⇒ Community outreach and locals support groups
- ⇒ Day and outpatient treatment
- ⇒ Counseling and grief groups specialized for the older adult

Reaching out is the first hurdle in healing from the family disease of alcoholism and/or drug dependency.

Alcoholism/Drug Dependency is:

- ◆ A disease
- ◆ Treatable
- ◆ Preventable

Mercer Council is a private, non profit health education organization combating alcoholism, drug abuse and related problems.

Established in 1978, the Council is a leader in providing quality education and prevention programs. Among our special services are community-based education and public information programs to reach older adults in our communities.

For confidential information and referral please call:

(609) 396-5874

You may contact us at:

MERCER COUNCIL

1931 Brunswick Avenue
Lawrence Twp., NJ 08648

Ph.: (609) 396-5874

Fax: (609) 396-3451

mcada@mercercouncil.org

www.mercercouncil.org

Medications and Alcohol

*A Guide
for
Older Adults*



mc
MERCER COUNCIL
ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG ADDICTION

Alcohol Problems Affect Older People

- As many as 1.6 million American over age 65 have problem with alcohol.
- Alcohol problem sometimes surface in the later years – many people report that they never drank or drank infrequently until they became older.
- Generally, older people with an alcohol problem consume less alcohol, although they are more likely to drink daily.
- Alcohol problem can be a threat to health, safety, and relationships with others.

Test Yourself

- ❑ Do you have an ulcer or other stomach problems?
- ❑ Do you feel depressed?
- ❑ Do you experience periods of memory loss when drinking?
- ❑ Would you rather drink than eat?
- ❑ Have you dropped out of activities that you used to enjoy?
- ❑ Are you isolated from others?
- ❑ Are you anxious or easily frightened?
- ❑ Do you get angry easily?
- ❑ Do you bruise easily or have frequent falls and accidents?

If you or some one you know answered "Yes" to any of these questions, its time to reach out for help.

How To Help an Older Person Who Drinks Too Much ?

1. Learn about alcoholism and drug dependency.
2. Admit that the person has a problem.
3. Contact Mercer Council staff at (609) 396-5874 for a referral to help.
4. Have hope that the person will recover.

Alcohol And Medication Do Not Mix

People over 65 make up 11 percent of the population and consume 25 percent of the nation's prescription drugs.

A person takes a great risk when combining one medication with another or a medication with alcohol, including over-the-counter medicines.

Long term use of alcohol damages the liver and makes it less able to properly use the medication. The medication sometimes stays in the system too long and jeopardizes health.

When a person drinks alcohol when taking a tranquilizer, pain- killer, or sleeping pill, the combination can cause severe reaction or death.

To Avoid Problems with Medication, Use the Following Precautions :

- Always follow the prescription on the particular prescription or over-the-counter drug.
- Check label or check with the pharmacist for any special instructions.
- Don't drink alcohol when you take medication.
- If a drug is not doing what it is supposed to do or if you have an unexpected symptom – rash, nausea, dizziness, headache – contact your doctor.
- Don't stop taking a prescribed medicine just because you are feeling better.
- Never trade medicines with anyone.
- Make a list of your medications to take to your doctor. It may be dangerous to take a new medication with others that you are taking already.
- If you are taking several different drugs and have trouble remembering when and how to take them, your pharmacist may be able to provide you with a handy checklist.