

ALCOHOL AND OLDER PEOPLE

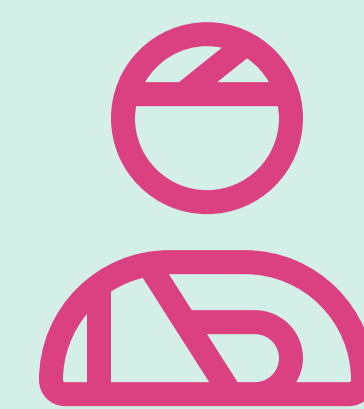
Fact sheet



Risk

Alcohol elevates health and safety risks for older people

Alcohol use elevates the health and safety risks of any age group. But these risks are especially increased for the older population.



60

More than 60 conditions caused by exposure to alcohol

More than 60 health conditions have been identified as either partially or entirely caused by exposure to alcohol.

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Harm

Alcohol causes harm due to long-term and acute effects

Harm due to alcohol comes from both chronic exposure as the result of alcohol use over time (e.g. liver cirrhosis), and acute impairment from heavy alcohol use episodes (e.g. falls and motor vehicle crashes).



All

Heavy alcohol use increases the risk of almost all diagnoses

Heavy alcohol use either on average or per-occasion (i.e. binge alcohol use) increases the risk of almost all alcohol-related diagnoses, e.g. cardiovascular disease, liver cirrhosis, cancers.

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Low Dose

Already low dose alcohol use carries risk for older people

For example, the risk of some cancers begins to increase with any alcohol consumption.



Low Dose

Already low dose alcohol use carries risk for older people

Older persons have increased risk of car crashes at very low BAC levels, and are more likely to incur severe injury and death than younger persons.

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No. 1

Heavy alcohol use is strongest modifiable risk factor for dementia

Higher quality research using advanced medical MRI brain scans, genetic randomization studies, and experimental animal studies show there is no protective effect of even low-volume alcohol use on cognition.



20%

Alcohol use disorder is pervasive among 65+ year olds

Approximately 20% of people aged 65 years or older have an Alcohol Use Disorder. AUD is linked with a doubling of risk for suicidal ideation or attempts.

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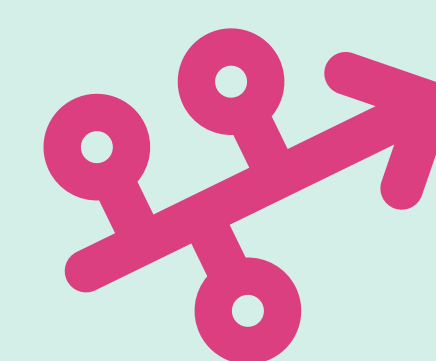
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Aging

Aging increases susceptibility to harms from alcohol use

Older people become increasingly susceptible to both the acute and longer term effects of alcohol consumption due to physiological changes, such as reduced muscle mass and reduced water in the body.



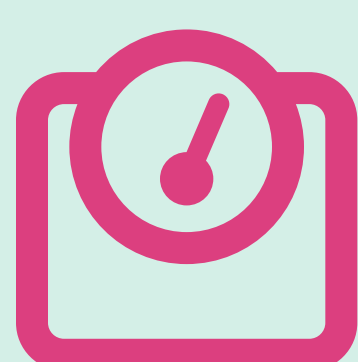
BAC

Higher and longer lasting blood alcohol concentration

The changes that occur in the older body result in higher and longer lasting blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) than would occur for the same quantity of ethanol intake by younger alcohol users.

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BMI

Physiological changes due to aging lead to more risks

Decreases in body mass (BMI) associated with aging can result in higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for older persons from consuming a fixed quantity of alcohol.



Health Risks

Greater health risks linked with aging increase the risks of harm

Changes in liver metabolism, slower reaction time and taking multiple chronic medications may further increase both BAC levels and the risk of experiencing alcohol harm from a given BAC.

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Risks rise in older people

The interaction of greater susceptibility to alcohol's effects and the greater health risks linked with aging combine to actually increase the risks of alcohol harm among older people

- For example, decreases in body mass associated with aging can result in higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) for older persons from consuming a fixed quantity of alcohol.
- In addition, changes in liver metabolism, slower reaction time and taking multiple chronic medications may further increase both BACs and the risk of experiencing negative alcohol-related effects from a given BAC.