

Alcohol and Aging: Changing Bodies, Changing Risk

The Amount of Alcohol in Your Glass

12 ounces of regular beer, which is usually about 5% alcohol

8-9 ounces of malt liquor which is usually about 7% alcohol

5 ounces of wine, which is typically about 12% alcohol

1.5 ounces of distilled spirits, which is about 40% alcohol

Medications that May have Harmful Interactions with Alcohol Include:

- Aspirin and acetaminophen
- Heart medications
- Sleeping pills
- Cold and allergy medicine
- Pain medication
- Anxiety or depression medication

Interactions with Medication

Mixing alcohol and medications can cause dangerous reactions even if you don't take them at the same time. It can:

- make your medication less effective.
- make your medication toxic to your body.
- make your medication side effects worse.
- cause new symptoms and make you ill.
- make you more "tipsy," especially if you drink alcohol at the same time you take certain medications.

Moderate Drinking

Drinking moderately is considered to have low risks depending on your underlying health conditions and the medications you take.

CDC considers moderate drinking:

Men: No more than two drinks a day or 14 drinks per week

Women: No more than 1 drink a day or 7 drinks per week

Binge Drinking

For men 5 drinks or more in a 2 hour period.

For woman 4 drinks or more in a 2 hours period.

Heavy Drinking

For men is considered 15 drinks or more a week.

For woman is considered 8 or more drinks a week.

Alcohol Use Disorder

- Chronic disease
- Can't control the amount of alcohol you consume
- Not able to stop drinking when you try
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Often causes relationship problems
- Difficulty meeting responsibilities

Healthy Aging and Alcohol

If you choose to drink alcohol the following tips can help you to reduce the negative impacts of drinking.

- Don't drink on an empty stomach
- Sip your drink slowly
- Don't drink and drive
- Tell your providers that you drink and how much
- Limit the amount you drink
- Don't drink alone
- Have alcohol free days
- Avoid drinking alcohol when you are angry, upset or depressed

Signs of Unintentional Harm from Drinking

- Memory issues after having a drink or taking medicine
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Loss of coordination
- Irritability, sadness, depression
- Lack of interest in usual activities

How SASH Can Help

- Confidential and non-judgmental support
- SASH Assessment
- Someone to talk to about risk factors
- Information
- Referrals to service providers

For More Information

- Vermont Recovery Network
www.vtrecoverynetwork.org/centers/
- Vermont Department of Health
www.healthvermont.gov/topic/prevent-alcoholdrug-abuse
- CDC
www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm
- SAMSHA
www.samsha.gov