

Drug and Alcohol Use Among the Elderly Encyclopedia Article

Drug and Alcohol Use Among the Elderly

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Drug and Alcohol Use Among the Elderly

Elderly people are the fastest-growing segment of the world population, and they consume about 25 percent of all the medicines prescribed. Because aging causes changes in various systems of the body, the ability to handle medication is different in the elderly than in the young. Alcohol abuse among older people can lead to falls, fractures, and other medical complications. The addition of medications (prescription and over-the-counter) to alcohol drinking can lead to disastrous complications and even premature death. However, recent research has suggested that drinking low to moderate amounts of alcohol (one to two standard-sized drinks per day) may help protect against the development of heart disease and stroke. Because the elderly are more susceptible to side effects from all types of substances (prescription and otherwise), the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [□](#) has advised people over 65 to limit themselves to a single drink each day. At any rate, even this amount of alcohol should be approved by the individual's physician, to make sure that the combination of alcohol and medical conditions or medications is safe.

%See Organizations of Interest at the back of Volume 2 for address, telephone, and URL.

See Also

Families and Drug Use; Treatment Types: an Overview.