Tips for healthy aging and alcohol use

- Eat food when you are drinking alcohol — don't drink on an empty stomach.
- Sip your drink slowly.
- Avoid drinking alcohol when you are angry, upset or depressed.
- Reward yourself for not drinking — use the time and money usually spent on drinking to do something healthy you enjoy, instead!

Resources

Vermont Area Agencies on Aging
Senior Help-Line: (800) 642-5119

Support and Services at Home (SASH)
(802) 863-2224

VNAs of Vermont
(855) 484-3862

Treatment and recovery programs specific to older adults
Call the Vermont Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs to see if your community has an age-specific treatment or recovery program:
(802) 651-1550

Prescription medicine disposal
Dial 2-1-1 to find medicine disposal locations in your community.

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
healthvermont.gov

Division of Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs
108 Cherry Street • Burlington, VT 05402
(800) 464-4343 • (802) 651-1550

Aging & Alcohol:
What you should know

VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

How does alcohol affect you as you age?

Decreased tolerance

Aging lowers the body's tolerance for alcohol. Older adults generally become intoxicated and impaired with fewer drinks. This puts older adults at higher risks for falls and other injuries and health problems.

Increased health problems

Certain health problems are common in older adults. Drinking more than the recommended guidelines can make these problems worse, including:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Liver problems
- Osteoporosis
- Memory problems
- Mood disorders

Medication interactions

Many prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and herbal remedies can be harmful or even deadly when mixed with alcohol. Medications that may have harmful interactions include:

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

Medicine and alcohol misuse can happen unintentionally

Here are some signals that may indicate an alcohol or medication interaction problem:

- Memory trouble after having a drink or taking medicine
- Changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Loss of coordination (walking unsteadily, frequent falls)
- Irritability, sadness, depression
- Lack of interest in usual activities

For more information, contact any of the resources on the back of this brochure.

No more than one drink a day.

For healthy adults age 65 and over, drinking more than one drink a day puts you at risk of serious health problems.

If you have a health problem or take certain medications, you should drink even less or not at all.

What is considered one drink?

12 fl. oz. of regular beer — about **5% alcohol**

8–9 fl. oz. of craft beer (shown in a 12 oz. glass) — about **7% alcohol**

5 fl. oz. of table wine — about **12% alcohol**

1.5 fl. oz. shot of 80-proof distilled spirits (gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc.) — **40% alcohol**

Although the "standard" drink amounts are helpful for following health guidelines, they may not reflect customary serving sizes.

In addition, while the alcohol concentrations listed are "typical," alcohol content varies within each type of beverage (e.g. beer, wine, distilled spirits).