

Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Elder Abuse – The Role of Drugs & Alcohol

Depression, anxiety, and loneliness are common in older adults. Some may turn to drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism, unaware of the potential for addiction. Chronic health conditions develop as part of aging, and older adults are often prescribed more medicines than other age groups, leading to a higher rate of exposure to potentially *addictive* medications. They also come with risks, including the possibility of **drug abuse**. Other risks could include *accidental* misuse of prescription drugs, and possible worsening of existing mental health issues. Drug abuse among the elderly can manifest in several ways, including misuse of prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs, and even illicit substances.

Drug-drug interactions happen when two or more medicines react with each other to cause unwanted effects or make either medicine’s effects more or less potent. Such interactions may also be caused by nutritional supplements, herbal products, nonprescription medicines as well as prescription medications, and, of course,— alcohol

Caregivers should be vigilant in recognizing signs that an elderly person may be struggling with drug abuse. These signs can include:

- Changes in behavior or mood or anxiety
- Worsening of existing mental health issues
- Withdrawal from social activities
- Neglecting personal hygiene

- Frequent requests for medication refills
- Confusion or memory issues, blackouts
- Needing extra supplies of medication



Caregiver Drug Abuse

For family or professional caregivers, the caregiving burden, anxiety, and depression are associated with a higher risk of elder abuse—in addition to caregiver reactions to the aggressive behavior from the care recipient. Negative effects of caring for a dependent relative such as stress, caregiver burden, mood disorders, and social isolation have been reported as risk factors for mistreatment of the care recipient.

When an elderly spouse is the caregiver, depression, anxiety, and loneliness are common for the caregiver and he or she may abuse drugs that belong to the care recipient.

Most elder abuse and neglect take place at home. According to the National Council on Aging, family members commit elder abuse in nearly 6 out of 10 case. Being proactive in communication, education, and monitoring can make a significant difference in the lives of elderly individuals, protecting them from the harmful effects of substance abuse.

Source: National Institute of Health



Alcohol Abuse

Caregivers can be especially vulnerable to problems involving **alcohol** in two ways. They themselves can drink or take prescription drugs to ease the stress and pain of working overtime to care for a loved one or client. Second, caregivers are naturals at taking care of someone else, and can find themselves involved with a person who has alcohol dependence and needs someone to care for him or her.

Alcoholism is a disease that includes the following four symptoms:

- ▶ **Craving**—A strong need, or urge, to drink.
- ▶ **Loss of control**—Not being able to stop drinking once drinking has begun.
- ▶ **Physical dependence**—Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after stopping drinking.
- ▶ **Tolerance**—The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get “high.”

What is a safe level of drinking?

For most adults, moderate alcohol use is up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older people. (One drink equals one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.) The beer or two you could drink without consequence in your 30s or 40s has more impact in your 60s or 70s.

Certain people should not drink at all, however:

- ➔ Women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- ➔ People who plan to drive or engage in other activities that require alertness and skill (such as using high-speed machinery)
- ➔ People taking certain over-the-counter or prescription medications
- ➔ People with medical conditions that can be made worse by drinking
- ➔ Recovering alcoholics
- ➔ People younger than age 21.

Resource for You

There are many national and local resources that can help. The **National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service** provides a hotline, 800-662-HELP, offering various resource information. Through this service you can speak directly to a representative concerning substance abuse treatment, request printed material on alcohol or other drugs, or obtain substance abuse treatment referral information in your State.

Taking Care of Yourself— 10 Tips

As a caregiver, you need to be physically and emotionally healthy. How do you take care of yourself while taking care of your loved one in addiction?

Here are a few tips to help you get started:

1. **Practice self-care.** Healthier eating, proper sleep and exercise.
2. **Have a support group you attend regularly.** Alcoholics Anonymous® or Nar-Anon meet caregivers of people living with addiction.
3. **Work with a therapist.**
4. **Avoid buffering your loved one from the consequences of their drug and alcohol use.**
5. **If you are in danger, leave.**
6. **Notice when you are agitated, nervous, or scared.**
7. **Protect your finances.**
8. **Set emotional boundaries.**
9. **Stand your ground.**
10. **Know when it is time to let go.**

Source: 10 Tips to Protect Caregivers of Someone Living With Addiction | American Addiction Centers
<https://americanaddictioncenters.org>

Live Life Laughing!

I thought reverse psychology was when you made your therapist cry.



Inspiration

The first to apologize is the *bravest*. The first to forgive is the *strongest*. The first to forget is the *happiest*.

Memory Care - Judgement

Dementia can impair judgment, making it difficult for seniors to understand the consequences of their medication and alcohol use.

*Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®*

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of

*Caregiving in
The Comfort of Home®*

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SAFETY TIPS— Signs of Elder Abuse

Knowing the signs and symptoms of abuse can help you determine if there is a problem. Signs and symptoms may include—

- **Physical injury**—bruises, cuts, burns or rope marks, broken bones or sprains that can't be explained.
- **Emotional abuse**—feelings of helplessness, a hesitation to talk openly, fear, withdrawal, depression, or agitation.
- **Lack of physical care**—malnourishment, poor hygiene, bedsores, soiled bedding, unmet medical needs.
- **Unusual behaviors**—changes in the person's behavior or emotional state, such as withdrawal, fear, anxiety or apathy.
- **Changes in living arrangements** without notifying anyone.
- **Unexplained changes** such as the appearance of previously uninvolved relatives or newly met strangers moving in.
- **Financial changes**—missing money or valuables, unexplained financial transactions, unpaid bills despite available funds, and sudden transfer of assets.

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“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Older adults may be more likely to experience mood disorders, lung and heart problems, or memory issues. Drugs can worsen these conditions, exacerbating the negative health consequences of substance use. Answer True or False to the questions below.

1. For family or professional caregivers, the caregiving burden, anxiety, and depression are associated with a higher risk of elder abuse.
T F
2. Chronic health conditions develop as part of aging, and older adults are often prescribed more medicines than other age groups, leading to a higher rate of exposure to potentially *addictive* medications.
T F
3. Drug-drug interactions happen when two or more medicines react with each other to cause unwanted effects or make either medicine’s effects more or less potent.
T F
4. When an elderly spouse is the caregiver, depression, anxiety, and loneliness are common for the caregiver and he or she may abuse drugs that belong to the care recipient.
T F
5. Most elder abuse takes place at a care facility or hospital.
T F
6. Caregivers can drink or take prescription drugs to ease the stress and pain of working overtime to care for a loved one or client.
T F
7. For most adults, moderate alcohol use is up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older people.
T F
8. A sign of abuse may be unusual behavior or changes in the person’s behavior or emotional state, such as withdrawal, fear, anxiety or apathy.
T F
9. Dementia can impair judgment, making it difficult for seniors to understand the consequences of their medication and alcohol use.
T F
10. People never turn to drugs or alcohol as a coping mechanism.
T F

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____