

champs

Center for Healthy Aging Ministries, Programs & Services

***FROM THE CHAMPS PARISH NURSE***



**Seniors Face Problems with Alcohol Use**

Generally we think of alcohol use as a teenager's problem, but the truth is alcohol use among persons 60 and older creates a safety risk for many. It may become an even more serious problem for families to manage especially as the baby boomer generation ages and the proportion of elders in society increases dramatically.

Aging brings on new challenges for many. Retirement is not always an easy adjustment especially if work was the focus of the individual's life or there are family problems, lowered financial resources and chronic illnesses. Compound this with having to consider a new living environment, the loss of a spouse, as well as possible physical limitations or social isolation and the problem may escalate.

Older adults with an alcohol problem often suffer from one or more chronic diseases that require multiple prescription drugs. Couple this with the usual age related problems of diminished vision, decreased mobility, and the other normal physiological changes and the problem of "just a few drinks" may cause significant problems.

Aging individuals account for the majority of purchases of both prescription and over-the-counter medications. Yet many do not realize that they should consult their pharmacist before using alcohol with any medication. Alcohol can have adverse effects even with common medications such as aspirin, ibuprofen, blood pressure medications, cold medications and a number of medication products—blood thinners, antibiotics, antihistamines, pain relievers, etc. Another interaction is that by combining a medication with alcohol the prescribed or over-the-counter medication may become ineffective for its intended use. Many emergency room visits by elderly are associated with alcohol-related problems.

The use of alcohol often goes undetected or is not reported therefore the actual statistics are not known however it is estimated that two to ten percent of the elderly are affected by alcohol. Families often don't think of this as a cause of the changes they may see in their aging relatives. Commonly they think of all changes as "just normal aging." Don't be fooled.

*This article is based on information from the Mayo Clinic web site:  
[www.hsc.wvu.edu/som/cmed/alcohol/alcoholism/seniors.htm](http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/som/cmed/alcohol/alcoholism/seniors.htm) - 5k -*

Champs  
Center for Healthy Aging, Ministries, Programs & Services  
13271 Millard Avenue  
Omaha, Nebraska 68137  
Tel: (402) 895-2224  
Website: [www.champsonline.info](http://www.champsonline.info)  
Email: [champs@crossandheart.org](mailto:champs@crossandheart.org)

Champs is funded by a grant from the Alegent Health Community Benefit Trust