



## Aging, medications, and alcohol use

Drinking alcohol when you are taking some prescription medications is a health risk for many baby boomers (ages 51-69) and older adults. This practice can have far-reaching health effects. Think Before You Drink is designed to remind baby boomers and older adults to learn more about this health risk and how to prevent it.

Aging bodies don't work well when some medications and alcohol are mixed. Even if you still feel at the top of your game, health-wise, aging can work against your health. The most obvious sign: Your body likely just doesn't feel like it used to feel.

Older bodies work more slowly to clear medications and alcohol, which can make older adults more sensitive to their effects. We also have less tolerance to alcohol than do younger adults. You may be surprised to find that you experience the effects of alcohol more quickly, even if you drink the same amount, than you did when you were younger.

Memory problems, mood disorders, poor balance and coordination, and weakness are other age-related health challenges. Prescription medications can make these health issues worse, if the medications are misused, abused, and/or combined with alcohol.

### Common health conditions for aging adults

- Arthritis
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Memory problems
- Poor coordination and balance
- Weakness
- Chronic Pain

*continued on page 2*

## Aging, medications, and alcohol use, *continued*

### **NIAAA drinking guidelines for older adults**

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, (NIAAA), adults age 65 and older who are health and do not take medications should not have more than:

*Three drinks in a given day*

*Seven drink a week*

If you have a health condition or take certain medication, you may need to drink less or not at all. Ask your health care professional for guidance.

### **Questions to ask your healthcare provider about medications**

When you have questions about your medications and alcohol use, consider your local pharmacist and your health care professional your “go-to sources” for information.

### ***Remember these 5 tips to help your health care professional help you manage your prescription medications safely***

1. Tell your health care professional about all the medications you take—prescription, over-the-counter, vitamins, and herbal supplements
2. Read and follow all instructions on your medication’s label
3. Follow instructions provided by your health care professional about your medication
4. Report any side effects from your medication to your health care professional
5. Don’t stop taking your medication unless your health care professional says to stop

### ***Ask these questions to learn more about your prescription medications and how to use them safely***

1. What is the name of the medicine and what is it for? Is it known by another name?
2. How and when do I take the medicine and for how long?
3. What foods, drinks, other medicines, dietary supplements, or activities should I avoid while taking this medicine? Can it interact with alcohol?
4. Should I take this medicine on an empty stomach or with food?
5. What are possible side effects, and what do I do if they occur?
6. When should I expect the medicine to begin to work, and how will I know if it is working?
7. Will this new prescription work safely with the other prescription and non-prescription medicines I am taking?
8. If it’s a once-a-day dose, is it best to take it in the morning or evening?
9. How should I store this medicine?
10. Is there any additional written information I should read about the medicine?