

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Elder Abuse - The Role of Drugs and 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 older adults 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, non-prescription medicines, as well as prescription medications, and, of course, alcohol.

Caregivers should be vigilant in recognizing signs that an older adult 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.

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When an older 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 takes place at home. According to the National Council on Aging, family members commit elder abuse in nearly six out of ten cases. Being proactive in communication, education, and monitoring can make a significant difference in the lives of older adults, 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 adults. (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 for Caregivers

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. Alcoholic 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>

FREE

CAREGIVER SUPPORT UPCOMING WEBINARS

through the Area Agency on Aging District 7's partnership with Trualta

19
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Webinar:
Dementia Care 101
1:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Webinar: Solutions
for Aging at Home
4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

26
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Scan the QR Code to register today!
Or visit aaa7.trualta.com



Memory Care

Judgment

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



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.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from "The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series". It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via email at info@aaa7.org.