

Consumer's Guide To Safe Drinking For Older Persons Of African-American Heritage

Alcohol is a beverage and a drug. Alcohol produces many pleasurable experiences including relaxation and a sense of wellbeing. Alcohol is highly addictive when consumed in large quantities over many years. Modest amounts of alcohol, such as one glass of wine, a beer, or one ounce of alcohol in a mixed drink may be slightly beneficial to some older people from all ethnic groups. Drinking more than two ounces of alcohol per day can produce harmful health effects to the brain, heart, and liver, as well as abnormal sensation in the feet and legs of older person.

Alcohol is broken down by the body into many chemicals that are similar to formaldehyde, which is used to pickle organs. Large amounts of alcohol can damage your brain. Dementia can result from heavy long-term drinking over a period of years. Alcohol-induced dementia is one of the five most common causes of intellectual loss in the older person. Heavy drinking is more likely to cause health problems in African-American drinkers than White drinkers.

Older persons should drink in moderation or not at all. One ounce of alcohol per day may be beneficial to persons who are physically healthy. Two ounces of alcohol per day is the maximum that an older person should drink and more than two ounces per day can produce health problems.

Any person with memory difficulty over the age of 65 should stop drinking alcohol. Alcohol worsens confusion in the older person, even those who do not suffer from dementia. Regular consumption of alcohol is not part of a successful aging program and older people should not drink for the "health benefits of alcohol". Older persons with normal intellectual function can continue to drink in moderation but they should alert their doctor that they are drinking alcohol to prevent potential interactions with medications. In general, red wine is probably the least likely to produce health problems when consumed in moderation. Occasional drinking in normal older individuals is most likely safe.