



Senior Sense

KNOWLEDGE FOR SENIOR ADULTS

Welcome to the first issue of *Senior Sense*

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc. is pleased to introduce our inaugural issue of *Senior Sense*. We already publish several newsletters in both electronic and print format for educators, government officials, and the general public. However, even though we deliver programs and presentations regularly for older adults, until now, we have not had a newsletter just for you.

Senior Sense is designed to bring news and useful information to seniors and those who work with older adults throughout Middlesex County. We hope *Senior Sense* will become a valuable tool you will look to for information to help you celebrate growing older in the healthiest ways possible.

Topics to be covered in future issues include depression, conflict, grief and loss, and how these issues may contribute to the dangerous use of alcohol. Understanding how alcohol may lead to dangerous drug interactions and affect you as you grow older, as well as how to spot the signals that a friend may be experiencing a problem and where to turn for help will also be addressed.

Senior Sense will be supplemented by

an extended section of our web site devoted to older adult issues. Your input is encouraged. Do you have something to share or want something in particular covered? Please drop a note to seniors@ncadd-middlesex.org.

Please enjoy your first issue and share it with your friends.

Steven G. Liga, CEO/Executive Director

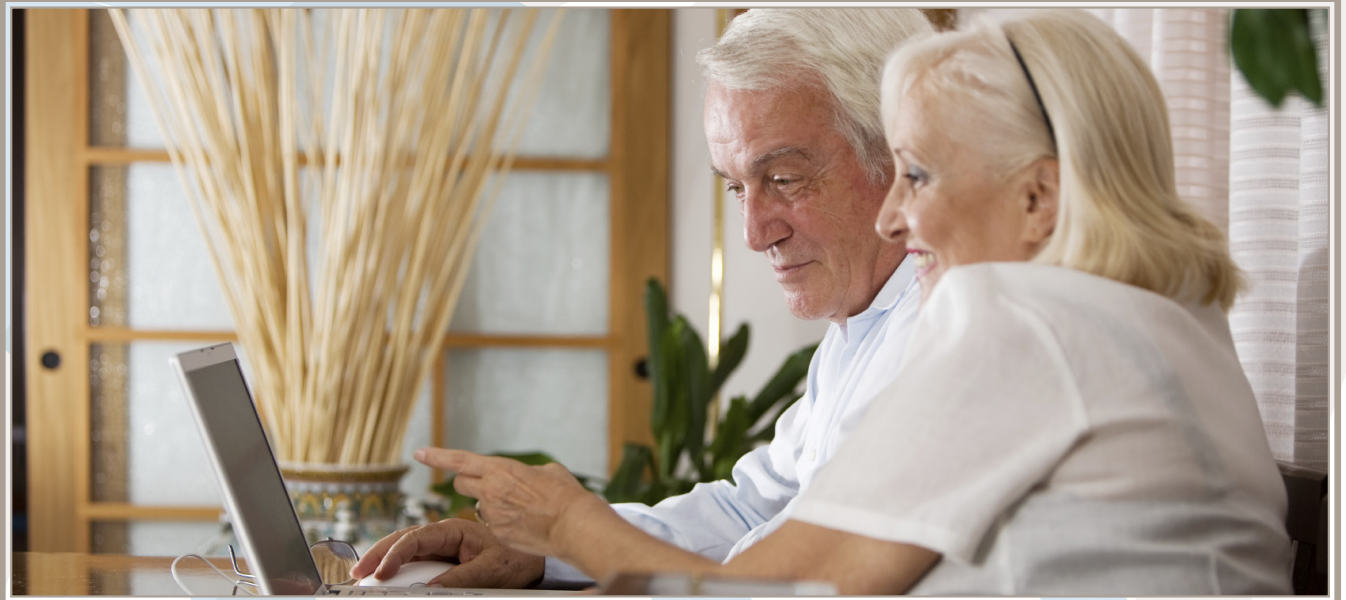


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Website offers information about older adults and alcohol use

Having a drink now and then as you get older is not usually thought to be harmful and most times it is not. However, alcohol can be a problem for older adults, especially if they take certain medications, have health problems or don't control their drinking.

NIHSeniorHealth.com is the premier health and wellness website for older adults. It was developed by the National Institute on Aging (NIA) and the National Library of Medicine (NLM), both parts of the National Institutes of Health.

The website provides helpful information about the effect alcohol may have on our bodies, health and lifestyles as we age.

Ageing lowers the body's tolerance for alcohol, and older adults can develop problems with alcohol even though their drinking habits haven't changed.

Besides information on alcohol and aging, the new website also discusses how much is safe to drink for most older men and women, what precautions to take if they're on medication and how to get help if drinking is a problem.

www.nihseniorhealth.gov features short segments of information that can be accessed in a number of formats, including various large-print type sizes, open-captioned videos and an audio version.

Did You Know?

Older Americans are increasingly turning to the Internet for health information. In fact, more than 70 percent of seniors online look for health and medical information when they go on the Web.

Write to Prevent

These days the average senior is probably seeing more than just a primary physician. It can get confusing with all of these doctors, the in and out quick routines of appointments, the different medications, etc.

So how can you make it easier on yourself? What measures can you take to make sure you get the right care? It's easy – just write it down.

Before your next doctor's appointment:

- Think of the main questions that have been on your mind recently, and write them down.
- Keep a running written log of how you're feeling and any symptoms that you are monitoring.
- Make a timeline of any past illnesses, surgeries, or any other major medical events in your life to give to your doctor.
- Bring all of your paperwork with you to your doctor's office,

Once there, speak about personal updates and concerns, and make sure the doctor takes the time to sit down with you. Make yourself an active part of your healthcare

Asking questions and being knowledgeable about your body are some of the biggest preventative measures you can take, helping to lead to early detection and other life saving steps for a healthier, happier you.

Source: Finding Your Way: Asking Questions to Get the Care You Need, Carolyn M. Clancy AARP Bulletin May 6, 2009

Senior Facts

- Older adults age quickly when suffering from alcoholism or addiction to mood-altering prescription drugs. They lose their health, their mental clarity, and their ability to live independently years earlier than other people their age.
- The loss of a spouse is seen as the single greatest loss an individual can experience. It results in the loss of security and companionship. Their adult children may be busy with their own lives and family and not available to help an aging parent. Build your support system now, so it is there when you need it later.



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Alcohol and the Elderly. Unreported, Undiagnosed, Or Ignored

Although alcohol and substance abuse is statistically at epidemic proportions among the elderly, it remains for the most part unreported, undiagnosed, or ignored. The reasons that substance abuse by our senior citizens goes undetected are varied, but most have to do with the fact that frequently less active in society, so there are simply fewer people around to notice. They are less likely to get in trouble with the law, so they have little contact with the police or the criminal justice system. Since many are retired, there is very little chance their drinking will cause them to lose a job or career.

Substance abuse among the elderly is a growing problem for the healthcare industry. According to one study (*"The Cost of Substance Abuse to America's Health Care System"* by *The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University*), substance abuse-related cases cost more to treat, because they require almost 26 percent more hospital staff and other resources than discharges that are unrelated to substance abuse.

It has been proven that alcohol problems can be successfully treated, even in the later years. In fact, older adults respond better to treatment, so if a problem is properly diagnosed, help is available.

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The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD) of Middlesex County, Inc. is a private, non-profit, community-based health organization providing prevention, education, information and referral services to county residents, businesses, schools, faith-based organizations, municipal alliances, and social service agencies since 1980.

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