



## HOUSING & COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

# OFFICE ON AGING

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## It's Only One Drink!

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Do these words sound familiar? Either from a family member, friend, or yourself? Alcohol misuse can be a sensitive topic, but is one that can affect adults as they age. Alcohol often affects an older adult's body differently than a younger person because of normal biological changes. April is **Alcohol Awareness Month** and can be a time to initiate a discussion with a loved one or to consider how alcohol affects your own life.

Be aware that:

- Older adults are more sensitive to the effects of alcohol; it may take only a small amount to become impaired.
- Some medical conditions worsen with alcohol use: high blood pressure, ulcers, diabetes, and congestive heart failure.
- Many medications (including over-the-counter and herbal supplements) can be dangerous if mixed with alcohol; in particular aspirin, allergy medicines, Tylenol, and medicines that already have a high-amount of alcohol in them (cough syrups).
- Alcohol can make falls more likely because it affects balance.

Sometimes a person may not realize that alcohol is affecting his/her health or safety. One person may have been a drinker all his/her life and another may have started drinking alcohol later in life. Regardless of when drinking starts it can have negative effects on a person's life. Knowing actions to take before alcohol interferes with daily life can help a person avoid the negative consequences of drinking too much. Loneliness can be avoided by staying connected with friends; some physical conditions, such as insomnia, can be lessened by avoiding caffeine later in the day; and stress can be treated with exercise and meditation.

If you or some you love do any of the following, consider getting help:

- Drink to calm your nerves or to reduce depression
- Drink quickly
- Frequently have more than one drink a day
- Lie about or try to hide drinking habits
- Hurt yourself or someone else while drinking
- Feel irritable or resentful when drinking
- Have medical, social, or financial problems because of alcohol

The County of Orange Office on Aging Information Specialists can connect you with resources available in Orange County. Call **1-800-510-2020** or **1-714-567-7500** for further information on the programs, counseling, or treatment options available to older adults. The Information Specialists can also answer your questions concerning other older adult services, such as friendly visitor programs, social activities at senior centers, local exercise programs, medical and health information, caregiving, and much more.

Source: National Institute on Aging-Alcohol Use and Abuse AgePage



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