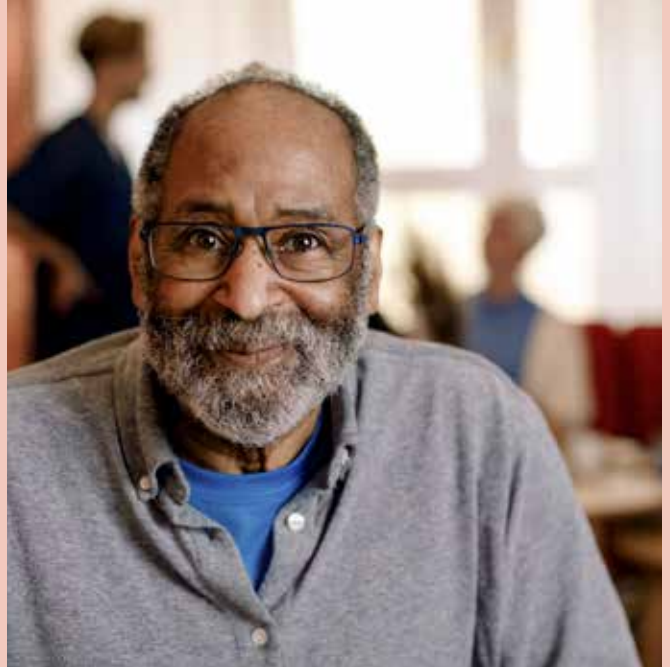


# Well & Wiser

What we've learned about  
aging and **alcohol**

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## Did you know?

Alcohol is a depressant,  
not a stimulant. It can make  
your mood worse.

# What we've learned about aging and alcohol use.

As we age, the body works differently. Sleep patterns shift. We carry less water. Metabolism slows. The liver and kidneys work more slowly.

**This changes how your body processes alcohol, affecting you in ways that are important to understand.**

- Effects may feel stronger or less predictable than in the past
- Increased risk of falls and other injuries
- Worsening mental health and memory issues
- Health conditions, like diabetes, high blood pressure and osteoporosis can get worse

## Why that could matter to you

-  **Memory issues**
-  **Loss of balance and increased risk of falls**
-  **Interruptions in sleep and daily readiness**
-  **Increased risk of cancer**



## Did you know?

Long-term alcohol use can lead to dementia-like symptoms.

## Alcohol + medication

You may be taking more prescribed or over-the-counter medications daily. When mixed with alcohol, side effects can become dangerous—or even life-threatening.

## Alcohol + cannabis

Cannabis can intensify the effects of alcohol, and alcohol can amplify the effects of cannabis. Mixing the two increases the risk of dizziness, confusion and falls.

## What to watch for

- Memory loss or confusion
- Dizziness or unsteadiness
- Unexpected sadness or irritability
- Trouble sleeping or staying asleep
- More frequent falls or near-falls

## What you can do

Reducing your drinking is a great way to improve health. Limiting or stopping drinking can lessen risks for dementia, heart disease, and certain cancers.

If you believe alcohol is affecting things that matter to you, ask for help. Talk with a trusted healthcare provider, a loved one, or contact VT Helplink (see back for more).



### Ask your doctor

Talk to your trusted healthcare provider about limiting or avoiding alcohol if you take medication for:

- Pain (opioids, acetaminophen, aspirin, ibuprofen, etc.)
- Anxiety or depression
- Sleep (sedatives or sleep aids)
- Heart health or blood pressure
- Allergies or cold

## Quick facts

- You may feel the effects of alcohol more strongly, even without drinking more, due to slowed metabolism and reduced body water.
- Alcohol can cause dangerous interactions with over-the-counter and prescription medications.
- Alcohol causes reduced balance and reaction times, which raises the risk of falls and bone fractures.
- Long term alcohol use can increase risk of dementia, heart disease and certain cancers.


### Help for you or someone you care about

Concerned about your or a loved one's alcohol use? Call VT Helplink for free, confidential support at **802-565-4565** or visit [VTHelplink.com](https://VTHelplink.com), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.


**If someone is not waking up or having trouble breathing, call 911.**



To find resources and support near you, call:

 **Support and Services at Home (SASH)**  
802-863-2224

 **Vermont Area Agencies on Aging Senior HelpLine**  
1-800-642-5119

 **Vermont Department of Health**  
[HealthVermont.gov/WellAndWiser](https://HealthVermont.gov/WellAndWiser)

