

# 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!**



**MAY 2014**

## Mental Health/Depression

Because many older adults often deal with heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancer and Parkinson’s disease, and because depression can occur with these illnesses, some health care professionals may mistakenly think that depression is normal for older adults. Depression *can* and *should* be treated when it occurs with other illnesses, since untreated depression can delay recovery or worsen outcomes. As symptoms of depression displayed by older adults may look different from those in younger people, seniors are often under-treated for depression and other mental health problems.



Many older adults may be ashamed to admit when they feel “blue,” thinking that it is a sign of weakness or failure. Clinical depression is not a failing; it is an illness. Mental illnesses are simply disorders that require treatment. We need to reassure the ones we care for that it is OK to feel down. Older adults need opportunities to express feelings such as anxiety, depression, frustration or grief, and receive recognition that these feelings are normal and valid.

### **Insomnia: Sleep On It**

One of the newest discoveries about treating depression is that treating sleep disorders, like insomnia, helps people feel less depressed. Nearly half of all people with depression report trouble sleeping, and people with insomnia are nearly twice as likely to be depressed. It makes sense: lying awake, unable to sleep makes problems seem worse, which makes depression worse. **Curing insomnia in people with depression could double their chance of a full recovery.**



The best insomnia cures do not involve taking drugs. Recent research shows that a form of treatment called “cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia” works best by teaching the person to establish a regular wake-up time and stick to it; get out of bed during waking periods; avoid eating, reading, watching TV or similar activities in bed; and eliminate daytime napping.

About the worst thing a sleepless person can do is to drink alcohol. Although it makes you feel sleepy, alcohol leaves you feeling groggy and unrested when you wake up in the morning. A person with severe insomnia needs a doctor’s help. When occasional sleepless nights occur, try a warm bath before bed, a massage, or warm milk or a soothing non-caffeinated beverage (other than alcohol). Bedrooms should be slightly cooler than the rest of the house, dark and quiet.

**Source: New York Times**

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### **Alcohol and Substance Abuse**

Seniors who make positive changes to their substance use patterns (like quitting smoking or cutting down on alcohol) feel happier and healthier.

Alcohol abuse and depression go hand in hand, especially in older adults. Once a person is past the age of 40, the effects of even moderate alcohol use are a lot worse. As we age, we lose muscle mass (which helps to burn off alcohol), our livers become less efficient (which slows how the body metabolizes alcohol), and we tend to be a bit dehydrated (which makes our bodies take a longer time to get rid of alcohol). Also, older individuals tend to take more medications (both prescription and over-the-counter) which increases the chances of dangerous alcohol-drug interactions. Levels of a substance which breaks down alcohol in the body tend to be lower in older people, too.

**All this means that older adults feel the effects of alcohol more and for a longer period than younger individuals.**

Doctors become concerned when people drink more than a *moderate* amount of alcohol: **up to two drinks per day for men and up to one drink per day for women** (one drink is about 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of liquor). Excessive alcohol consumption increases the risks of liver disease, stroke, high blood pressure, certain types of cancer and dementia, as well as accidents and injuries.

*Source: CDC; Wall Street Journal, Drinking After 40*



## **Resources for You**

### **The Center for Mental Health Services**

(800) 789-2647

[www.mentalhealth.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.gov)

*Provides information about mental health*

### **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**

(800) 273-TALK (8255)

[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)

*A free and confidential, 24/7 hotline available to anyone in suicidal crisis or emotional distress.*

### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

Visit [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) to find a meeting near you to help recover from alcoholism.



## **Is Anger Making Your Blood Boil?**



**Anger accounts for about 30,000 heart attacks a year in the US.** Those prone to anger are also more likely to have strokes. Cool down, relax, and keep life in perspective - it might save your life.

*Source: Harvard Health Letter*

## **Don't Fall, Be Safe!**

Antidepressant medication is the number one drug associated with falls in the elderly. This is because many of these drugs have strong sedative properties and can make people clumsy.

*Source: Archives of Internal Medicine*

# TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

## Control Your Reaction

*When you are frustrated, it is important to know what is and what is not within your power to change. Frustration often comes when we try to change something that can't be changed. We can't change the fact that the person we care for has dementia and the person with dementia cannot change the fact that normal daily activities (dressing, bathing and eating) are now very difficult. The only thing you can control is your reaction and recognize the warning signs of frustration:*

- Calm yourself down physically;
- Change your thoughts in a way that reduces your stress;
- Communicate assertively and ask for help.



**Source: Family Caregiver Alliance**

## Upcoming Alzheimer's Association Workshops

### Understanding and Dealing with Alzheimer's Disease or Another Dementia

alzheimer's   
association®

*This program will provide an opportunity for families and caregivers to learn and ask questions about Alzheimer's disease and dementia, while receiving support from others in similar situations. Program is free of charge. No registration required.*

#### **Gallia County: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm at Selected Locations (noted below)**

May 27th - Understanding Behaviors (Arbors)

June 24th - Open Discussion (Holzer Assisted Living) • July 15th - Unspoken Grief: Losses of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementia (Holzer Senior Care) • August 26th - Safety Considerations (Abbyshire Place)

#### **Jackson County: 1:00 pm - 2:30 pm at Four Winds Nursing Facility in Jackson or Jenkins Care Community in Wellston (noted below)**

June 19th - Unspoken Grief: Losses of Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementia (Four Winds)

July 17th - Safety Considerations (Jenkins) • August 21st - Open Discussion (Four Winds)

September 18th - Activities and Interaction (Jenkins) • October 16th - Advanced Stage Issues and Decisions (Four Winds)

November 20th - Dealing with Holidays (Jenkins) • December 18th - Open Discussion (Four Winds)

January 15, 2015 - Making the Transition from Home to a Care Facility (Jenkins)

#### **Scioto County: 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm at Best Care Nursing and Rehab in Wheelersburg**

June 10th - Open Discussion • August 12th - Making the Transition from Home to a Care Facility

October 14th - How to Make Visits More Meaningful (At Home and Nursing Facility)/Dealing with Holiday Issues

December 9th - Understanding Challenging Behaviors

**For more information about these programs and other similar programs available in or near your community, or for assistance with registering, please call Melissa Dever, LSW, from the Alzheimer's Association, at (740) 710-1821.**



**Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.**

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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 nurse or social worker 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 e-mail at [info@aaa7.org](mailto:info@aaa7.org).*

## ***Safety Tips - Mixing Drugs and Alcohol***

Alcohol-drug interactions are dangerous. Because alcohol and many medications are processed by the liver, this can enhance the effects of alcohol or the medications. Some examples are:

- Heartburn drugs like Zantac interfere with the metabolism of alcohol and raise blood-alcohol levels.
- Acetaminophen (Tylenol), when combined with alcohol, can damage the liver.
- Mixing alcohol with blood thinners like Coumadin can cause dangerous bleeding.
- Taking alcohol with some pain medications and anti-anxiety drugs can make a person overly sleepy, more likely to have heart problems, and, most important, more likely to overdose.
- Long-term alcohol use can raise blood pressure.
- Alcohol tends to irritate the stomach.

If you're not sure if a medication can be combined with alcohol, avoid any alcohol consumption until your doctor or pharmacist has told you that it's safe to mix the two.

**Source: CDC, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**

