



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH'S  
**FRESH**  
CONVERSATIONS



September 2019  
Volume 6, Number 9

A Healthy Living Newsletter for Seniors

## How Much is Too Much?

*Did you know that the Dietary Guidelines for Americans has recommendations for alcohol?*

### What's considered one drink?

While many of us just consider one glass or mug as "one drink," we may be fooling ourselves. According to U.S. Dietary Guidelines, "one drink" is technically: 12 ounces of beer, at 5 percent alcohol; 5 ounces of wine, at 12 percent alcohol; 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits, at 40 percent alcohol.

### How many drinks per day are considered too much?

What counts as "moderate" drinking isn't clear. For years, risky behavior meant more than one drink for women, two for men (women tend to be smaller and have proportionally less water weight than men, resulting in higher blood alcohol levels per drink).

A 2018 study published in *The Lancet* challenged the current standard of low-risk drinking, suggesting that drinking more than about six drinks per week raises the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer.

### Do you tolerate alcohol better as you age?

No. Older adults generally experience the effects of alcohol more quickly than when they were younger. They tend not to metabolize alcohol as quickly or efficiently, as the body changes with age.



### What's up between alcohol and your liver?

The liver helps remove alcohol from the blood. It changes alcohol to a chemical called acetaldehyde, which is toxic. Too much of it can damage the liver and eventually limit the liver's ability to function.

### Heavy drinking takes a toll on your health.

It can increase your risk of falling. It worsens conditions like osteoporosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke and mood disorders; and increases your likelihood of certain kinds of cancer.<sup>1</sup>

**The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) recommends that adults over age 65 limit their alcohol to no more than three drinks on any day and only seven drinks per week.**





**Anyone, at any age, can develop a drinking problem.**

## Binge Drinking Among Adults 65 and Older is on the Rise

Binge drinking can be harmful for older people because it increases the risk of injuries and falls and can make chronic health problems worse.

A new study analyzed recent national survey data on alcohol use from almost 11,000 people aged 65 years and older who completed the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. (2015-2017)

The researchers estimated that one in 10 adults in the U.S. who are 65 years of age and older are “current binge drinkers.” This was defined as 4 or more drinks for women and 5 for men, in one sitting.

The researchers also found that 24% of older people who reported at least one binge drinking episode in the previous month had chronic conditions such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.<sup>2</sup>

**Did you know that 22% of adults in Iowa drink excessively, the 3rd highest among all states and more than the national rate of 18%.**

## Want to Stay Injury-Free and Independent? Avoid Falls.

Some people believe there is nothing they can do to prevent falls. It happens.

It's true—it does happen—but there are many ways to reduce your fall risk.

- **Find a good balance and exercise program.** Look to build balance, strength and flexibility. Contact your local Area Agency on Aging for referrals. Find a program you like and take a friend
- **Talk to your health care provider.** Ask for an assessment of your risk of falling. Share your history of recent falls.
- **Regularly review your medications with your doctor or pharmacist.** Make sure side effects aren't increasing your risk of falling. Take medications only as prescribed.
- **Get your vision and hearing checked annually** and update your eyeglasses. Your eyes and ears are key to keeping you on your feet.
- **Keep your home safe.** Remove tripping hazards, increase lighting, make stairs safe and install grab bars in key areas.
- **Talk to your family members.** Enlist their support in taking simple steps to stay safe. Falls are not just a seniors' issue.<sup>3</sup>

**Try Tai Chi for strengthening your balance.**





# Falls are the Leading Cause of Injury Death for Older Americans

Falls threaten seniors' safety and independence and generate enormous economic and personal costs.

- 1 in 4 Americans aged 65+ fall each year.
- Every 11 seconds, an older adult is treated in the emergency room for a fall.
- Every 19 minutes, an older adult dies from a fall.
- By 2020, the annual direct and indirect cost of fall injuries is expected to reach almost 68 billion.<sup>4</sup>



*Testimonial*

**Kay's smile is sure to light up any room, including the Guttenberg Senior Center.**

**Kay Cherne** lives across the street from the meal site and is typically the first one to the center each day. She's an avid fan of putting puzzles together, reading and quilting. She enjoys the companionship, activities and tasty meals at the site.

Kay shares that the *Fresh Conversation's* program has helped her eat healthier. "I learn how to eat differently at the meetings. And, there is often a nice selection of produce to take home."

Kay finds daily visits to the local fitness center and attending *Fresh Conversations* helps keep her diabetes in good control. She shares that when she sees facilitator, Ammi Hugo, out walking it motivates her to be active and stay healthy.

**Don't let pride get in the way. Walkers and canes can greatly reduce fall risk.**

## Fall Risk Screening is a Medicare Benefit

Tell your friends! When people first become eligible for Medicare, they are entitled to a "Welcome to Medicare Preventive Visit" (or Initial Prevention Physical Exam) that must include screening for both fall risk and home safety. Subsequently, all Medicare enrollees are entitled to an "Annual Wellness Visit" that includes falls and safety screenings.

*Decoding Answers (page 4): 1. One Drink; 2. Tolerate; 3. Falls; 4. Vision; 5. Medications*



### Sources:

<sup>1</sup> Yeager, S. "Quiz: Alcohol and Your Health." AARP. Retrieved August 1, 2019. <https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/info-2019/alcohol-quiz.html#quest1>

<sup>2</sup> Han, B.H., Moore, A.A., Ferris, R., Palamar, J.J. "Binge Drinking Among Older Adults in the United States, 2015 to 2017." *Journal of American Geriatrics Society*. July 2019. Retrieved. August 1, 2019. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/jgs.16071>

<sup>3</sup> National Council on Aging, Falls Prevention

<sup>4</sup> National Council on Aging and Center for Disease



## Recipe of the Month

### Hurry Up Baked Apples

Serving size: Half of an apple

#### INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium size tart apples (Granny Smith, Braeburn, Cortland, Jonathan, Fuji)
- 1 teaspoon white or brown sugar, packed
- ¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons oatmeal
- 2 tablespoons (total) raisins, sweetened dried cranberries, chopped walnuts or other nuts
- 1 container (6-ounces) low fat vanilla yogurt



#### DIRECTIONS

1. Cut apples in half lengthwise. Use spoon to remove cores and hollow out a space 1" or more deep. Arrange apple halves, cut sides up, in microwavable dish. Cut thin slices off bottoms to keep from tipping.
2. Combine sugar, cinnamon, oatmeal, raisins, cranberries, and nuts. Fill each apple half with sugar mixture.
3. Cover with plastic wrap. Fold back one edge ¼" to vent steam.
4. Microwave 3 to 3½ minutes or until apples can be cut easily. Remove from microwave. Let sit a few minutes.
5. Spoon yogurt over the top.

*This recipe is provided by Iowa State University Extension and Outreach. For more recipes like this, visit the Spend Smart. Eat Smart. website at <http://spendsmart.extension.iastate.edu>. Spend Smart. Eat Smart. is a registered trademark of Iowa State University.*

**Recipe tip: These are great as a dessert, as a snack or for breakfast.**

## Take Action Corner

This month I will...

---



---



---

## Core Strength



Do you have trouble getting out of bed or a chair or find it difficult to stoop to put on socks and shoes? You need strong core muscles for these activities.

Core muscles include the muscles around the front and back of your trunk and pelvis. They're not easy to see like arm and leg muscles.

And the good news is, you don't need to drop and do 25 sit ups to see improvements. Doing simple knee lifts while sitting in a chair can strengthen your core.

## Decoding Healthy Behaviors

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
12	5	19	10	3	21	17	23	14	24	2	26	15

N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
22	7	25	9	1	18	11	6	13	20	4	16	8

1. "\_\_\_\_\_" differs between types of alcohol.

2. Older adults \_\_\_\_\_ alcohol less than younger people.

3. Drinking can increase your risk for \_\_\_\_\_.

4. Regular \_\_\_\_\_ checks can help you prevent falls.

5. Some \_\_\_\_\_ can increase your risk for falling.



Program developed by Iowa Department of Public Health in partnership with Iowa Department of Human Services and Department on Aging. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.