

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OLDER ADULTS: SUBSTANCE USE FACTS

Research suggests that substance **use** is an emerging public health issue **among** the nation's **older adults**. **Illicit drug use among adults** aged 50 or **older** is projected to increase from 2.2 percent to 3.1 percent between 2001 and 2020

Conclusion: Highlighting the number of older adults on an average day who use substances, enter substance use treatment, or visit the emergency department for substance-related issues may help draw attention to this emerging issue.

https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_2792/ShortReport-2792.html#:~:text=Research%20suggests%20that%20substance%20use,percent%20between%202001%20and%202020.

Substance Abuse Among Older Adults

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4146436/>

The myth that older adults do not use substances and/or do not use substances problematically has been dispelled. Older-adult substance users may not present with the same symptoms as their younger counterparts and, therefore, may be more difficult to identify. Treatment options remain generally limited, as few programs or health care settings offer tailored interventions for older adults. Health care professionals need to continue to do as thorough of assessments as possible and enlist the help of formal measures, Web-based assessment, and build in the questions outlined earlier as routine. As the baby boom generation ages, the health care system will be challenged to provide culturally competent services to this group, as they are a unique generation of older adults. Knowledge about older-adult substance use and the issues that contribute to late onset or maintained addiction in late life will need to be continually updated as we learn how and why this generation of adults uses substances. Furthermore, the advancement and development of interventions that may be more useful for, effective for, and desired by this incoming generation of older adults than previous generation, such as mobile interventions, will be crucial to alleviating the projected pressures on the health care system.

Alcohol, tobacco & other drugs in Australia

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/priority-populations/older-people>

Older people make up a considerable proportion of Australia's population. In 2017, over 1 in 7 people were aged 65 and over and the number and proportion of older Australians is expected to continue to grow (AIHW 2018). Older people have unique health circumstances including pain, co-morbidities, and social circumstances such as isolation (DoH 2017). These contextual factors are important to consider in the context of alcohol and other drug use. Refer to Box OLDER1 for how 'older people' are defined in this report.

FACT SHEETS

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/alcohol/alcohol-tobacco-other-drugs-australia/contents/fact-sheets>

Substance abuse among older adults: A growing problem

Current Psychiatry. 2018 March;17(3):14-20 By [James Cho, MD](#) [Jay Bhimani, MD](#) [Milapkumar Patel, MD](#) [Matthew Navin Thomas, MBBS](#)

Individual, social, and familial factors can contribute to substance use and abuse in late life. The **Table**¹ outlines some of the potential risk factors for older adults associated with the use of illicit substances. Substance abuse among older adults can be divided into 2 broad categories: early onset (starting before age 50) and late onset (starting after age 50).⁸ While data are limited, in general, early-onset use is a more common pattern; late-onset use represents an estimated <10% of substance use among older adults.

Drug Use, Misuse and Dependence Among Older Adults

<https://www.hazeldenbettyford.org/education/bcr/addiction-research/older-adults-drug-abuse-ru-315>

Download the **Drug Use, Misuse and Dependence Among Older Adults** Research Update.

Misuse of illicit and prescription drugs among people aged 50 and older is a serious health issue accompanied by a number of adverse consequences (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2014). Studies predict that as the baby-boom generation ages, rates of alcohol and drug abuse will continue to increase through the year 2020 (Simoni-Wastila & Yang, 2006). This Research Update summarizes the current state of knowledge regarding hazardous drug use among older adults and discusses the implications of both hazardous use and dependence.

Sincere regards

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