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# How To Help Someone You Know Who Drinks Too Much

Follow these tips for helping a family member or friend whose alcohol use is affecting their health or relationships.

Alcohol tolerance can change with age. As people grow older, they may find that the effects of the same amount of alcohol they consumed when younger now have a more dramatic impact. Older adults also tend to take more medications, some of which can boost the effect of alcohol and cause other harmful interactions. Major life changes or health issues can lead to [alcohol misuse](#) or [alcohol use disorder](#).

Alcohol misuse often doesn't affect just one person. It can also cause stress and worry for friends and family. It can be difficult to communicate your concerns and find ways to help a loved one cut back or quit drinking. Following are suggestions on how to approach the topic, offer to help, and take care of yourself.



## Step 1: Talk

- Talk about your worries when the person is sober. Try to express what you think or feel, such as, “I am concerned about your drinking.”
- [Provide facts](#). Some people find it helpful just to have more information.
- Try to avoid labels such as “alcoholic.”
- You could start the conversation with: “I want to share some things I’ve learned about how alcohol affects the health of older adults” or “If you ever think about making a change, I’ve heard of some tools that can help.”
- Ask if you can join in on a doctor or counselor appointment.

## Step 2: Offer your help

- Suggest [activities](#) that don’t include drinking alcohol.
- Point the person toward [helpful resources](#) and [tools](#), such as those found at [Rethinking Drinking](#).
- Encourage counseling or attending a group meeting. Offer to drive the person to and from these meetings.
- Keep in mind that overcoming alcohol use disorder is an ongoing process that may include setbacks.
- Be supportive during treatment, such as joining the person for family or group counseling meetings or just listening and being patient.

## Step 3: Take care of yourself

- Caring for someone with alcohol misuse or use disorder can be stressful. It may help to seek support from friends, family, community, or counseling groups.
- Involve other family members or friends so you are not in this alone. Talk honestly about how you are feeling. Ask for the support or help you need.
- Try going to counseling or special meetings that offer support to families and friends of people with alcohol use disorders. There may be programs at your local hospital or clinic. For example, [Al-Anon](#) is a support group for friends and family of people with a drinking problem. Find a meeting near you by calling [888-425-2666](#).
- If you are experiencing symptoms of anxiety or depression, think about seeking professional help for yourself.

## You may also be interested in

- Learning [facts about aging and alcohol](#)
- Exploring information on [depression and older adults](#)
- Finding out how to [talk with your doctor about sensitive issues](#)

## For more information about help for alcohol problems

### Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol and Your Health

[www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov)

### National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

National Institutes of Health

888-696-4222

[niaaaweb-r@exchange.nih.gov](mailto:niaaaweb-r@exchange.nih.gov)

[www.niaaa.nih.gov](http://www.niaaa.nih.gov)

### Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

877-726-4727

800-487-4889 (TTY)

[samhsainfo@samhsa.hhs.gov](mailto:samhsainfo@samhsa.hhs.gov)

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

### Alcoholics Anonymous

212-870-3400

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

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