

# Substance Misuse & Older Adults

While substance use disorder is lower among older adults, it is currently on the rise. As the body ages, it becomes less effective at absorbing and metabolizing drugs and alcohol, making older adults more vulnerable to their effects.

Additionally, older adults may unintentionally misuse medications, whether by forgetting to take them, taking them too frequently, or consuming incorrect dosages. Some may turn to substances as a way to cope with significant life changes, such as retirement, grief, declining health, or changes in living situations.

Chronic health conditions often accompany aging, leading to older adults being prescribed more medications than other age groups, which increases their exposure to addictive medications.

Alcohol is the most commonly used drug among older adults, with approximately 65% of individuals aged 65 and older reporting high-risk drinking, and over 10% engaging in binge drinking. Alcohol use disorder can heighten the risk of numerous health issues, including diabetes, high blood pressure, congestive heart failure, liver and bone problems, memory impairments, and mood disorders.

*If you choose to drink, do so in moderation.*



Misusing prescription drugs also poses risks, particularly regarding mental health issues, especially with opioids and benzodiazepines.

It's never too late to quit using substances. Stopping can significantly enhance quality of life and improve future health.

Source: National Institute on Drug Abuse

Struggling with an addiction?  
Concerned for a loved one? Need to talk?

Addiction Helpline for Portage County

330.678.3006



**Only receive prescription medications from a trusted pharmacy**

## Illegal Online Pharmacy Red Flags

- Sell prescription drugs without requiring prescription from a healthcare provider
- Offers much cheaper prices
- Lists prices in foreign currency
- Medicine without an expiration or is expired
- Medicine arrives broken or damaged

Fake pills are easy to purchase, widely available, often contain fentanyl and can be deadly. Criminals are mass-producing fake pills and falsely marketing them as legitimate pills. Many fake pills are made to look like prescription drugs such as Oxycotin, Percocet, Vicodin, Xanax and Adderall.

Source: DEA

*Counterfeit drugs look identical to the real thing. The only safe medications are those purchased with a prescription from a doctor, nurse, dentist or pharmacist.*



## Carry Naloxone

It's important that anyone who has pain prescription medications also have naloxone, the overdose reversal medication. It is a nasal spray and can be obtained without a prescription at a local drug store or health department. It is also available free through the mail by scanning the QR code or visit: <https://shorturl.at/OkRAM>

