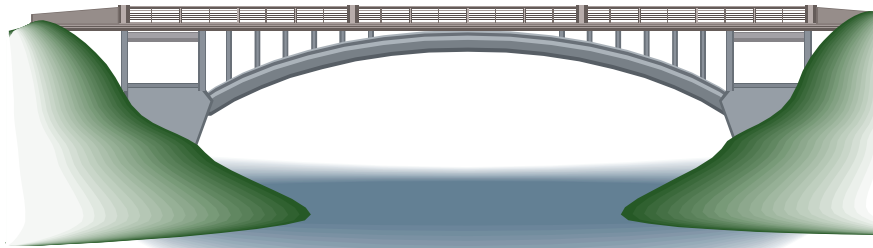


# MHASI Matters



“Building Bridges Between Mental Health and Aging”

## Alcohol and Older Adults: Things You Should Know

Many older adults enjoy a drink now and then. What you may not know is that alcohol (wine, beer or liquor) may affect people differently as they age.

1. Older adults are more sensitive to alcohol.
  - Drinking the same amount of alcohol may have a stronger affect than it used to due to slower rates of metabolism.
2. Alcohol may make medical problems worse.
  - High blood pressure, diabetes, ulcers and depression can be made worse by drinking alcohol.
  - Alcohol can make it hard to sleep and feel rested.
  - Some medications may not work as well when drinking alcohol.
3. Health problems may be hard to spot.
  - Alcohol can cause changes in the heart and blood vessels, possibly hiding pain that could warn of a heart attack.
  - Drinking alcohol can cause confusion and memory loss which could be mistaken as signs of Alzheimer’s disease.
4. Mixing medications and alcohol can be dangerous.
  - Ask a doctor or pharmacist about alcohol and your medications.
5. Drinking alcohol can lead to injury.
  - Even small amounts of alcohol can affect a person’s balance, coordination and reaction time. This increases the chance of falls or other accidents, including accidents while driving.
6. Alcohol can change the brain.
  - Studies show that alcohol dependence may age the brain faster. This can reduce a person’s ability to think and remember clearly.
7. If health care provider says its okay to drink alcohol, know limits.
8. Experts recommend adults over age 65 drink no more than one alcoholic drink per day. One alcoholic drink equals:
  - 12 ounces of beer, or
  - 5 ounces of wine, or
  - 1.5 ounces of liquor (distilled spirits)
9. Not everyone who drinks has a problem (see Warning Signs →)
9. Be honest with the doctor about alcohol consumption.
  - Drinking habits may not have changed over time, but as you age the body handles alcohol differently.
10. Alcohol problems can be treated.
  - Treatment options include 12-step programs, individual or group counseling, medications and in-patient stays.
  - Don’t let alcohol get in the way of health and independence while aging.

—Source: Tips for Seniors; Journeyworks Publishing

Spring 2010

**April is...**  
**Alcohol Awareness Month**  
**Stress Awareness Month**  
**May is...**  
**Older Americans Month**

## What is MHASI Matters?

MHASI Matters is a quarterly newsletter produced by the Gero-Psych Program in Southern Illinois. Its intended audience is social service providers, nurses and physicians who see and care for persons 60 and better. **MHASI** is an acronym for **Mental Health and Aging Systems Integration**. Our goal is to give you up-to-date information on older adult issues with treatment suggestions, opportunities for professional development, information on community seminars and contact information to link you with the Gero-Psych Specialist in your region. See page four for contact information.

## Warning Signs of Alcohol Abuse

If you answer “yes” to any of the following questions, you may have a problem with alcohol:

- Do you drink alone when you feel angry or sad?
- Does your drinking ever make you late for work?
- Does your drinking worry your family?
- Do you ever drink after telling yourself you won’t?
- Do you ever forget what you did while drinking?
- Do you get headaches or have a hangover after drinking?

—Source: How to Cut Down on Your Drinking  
National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism  
National Institutes of Health

## Fact Sheet on Stress: Know the Signs

“If you’re feeling overwhelmed by stress, you are not alone. In fact a survey of Americans found that one-third of people are living with extreme stress.” Get in touch with how you are feeling and learn about the effects of stress on your whole body.

**Stress can adversely affect your body! Stress can affect your:**

- Brain and Nerves
- Skin
- Muscles and Joints
- Heart
- Stomach
- Pancreas
- Intestines
- Reproductive System
- Immune System

**Are you experiencing the signs of stress?**

- Feeling angry, irritable or easily frustrated
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Change in eating habits
- Problems concentrating
- Feeling nervous or anxious
- Trouble sleeping
- Problems with memory
- Feeling burned out from work or caregiving
- Feeling that you can’t overcome difficulties in your life
- Having trouble functioning in your job or personal life

**If you have any of these symptoms**, it is important that you take care of yourself.

To learn more information go to [www.LiveYourLifeWell.org](http://www.LiveYourLifeWell.org). If you feel overwhelmed, unable to cope and feel as though your stress is affecting everyday functioning, it could be something more like depression or anxiety. Don’t let it go unchecked. Contact your health care provider or the Gero-Psych Specialist in your region—contact information is on page four.

—Source: *Mental Health America*

## May 23-29 is Older Americans' Mental Health Week

Older Americans’ Mental Health Week spreads the message that mental illness is not a normal part of aging. Public awareness increases a community’s understanding of mental illness and reduces the stigma that keeps many older Americans from seeking help.

Public awareness activities can range from an information display at a library to a speaker panel event. Together, during Older Americans’ Mental Health Week, we will continue to tell the American public and policy makers that:

- Mental illness is not a normal part of aging.
- Mental illnesses are real, common and treatable.
- The more people know, the more they can help themselves and others.
- Healthy adults continue to learn, enjoy life and contribute to society.

Public policy should promote mental health, not discriminate against older adults who have mental health problems.

More information on this event will be available soon at [www.owl-national.org](http://www.owl-national.org).

## ***Professional Conferences/Staff Development Opportunities***

### **Training for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Support Group Leaders**

**March 30, 2010 (9 a.m. –12 p.m.)**

Murphysboro, IL

**April 1, 2010 (1:30-4:30 p.m.)**

Harrisburg, IL

**April 21, 2010 (1:30 –4:30 p.m.)**

Mounds, IL

**April 22, 2010 (6-9 p.m.)**

Benton, IL

Contact: University of Illinois Extension, Carbondale Office, 618.453.5563

### **Suicide: Prevention, Risk Assessment and Intervention**

**April 23, 2010** Wedeberg Conference Center @Memorial Medical Center

Springfield, IL

Contact: Memorial's HealthLine, 217.788.3333 or toll-free 1.877.217.7883.

### **Rural Health: Uncommon Challenges Met With Unwavering Spirit-21st Annual Educational Conference**

**April 27-29, 2010** Keller Convention Center

Effingham, IL

Contact: Illinois Rural Health Association, 1.866.921.4742

### **5th Annual Metro East Meth + Other Drugs Conference**

**April 28-29, 2010** National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows

Belleville, IL

Contact: Tarra Winters, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois, 618.583.2116

Contact: Cary Trame, Illinois State Police, 618.346.3616

### **Alzheimer's Association Family Forum (half day)**

**May 8** John A. Logan College

Carterville, IL

Contact: The Alzheimer's Association, 217.726.5184 or 618.985.1095

### **3rd Annual Conference on Alzheimer's Disease: Risk & Protective Factors & Early Interventions**

**May 11, 2010** James T. Dove Conference Center @ Prairie Heart Institute

Springfield, IL

Contact: Leslie Randolph, SIU School of Medicine, CADRD, 217.545.7181

### **Professional Caregivers' Conference**

**June 2, 2010** John A. Logan College

Carterville, IL

Contact: Lynn Tadda, The H Group

### **7th Annual Illinois Pioneer Summit—Date Saver**

**October 12-13** Crowne Plaza Hotel

Springfield, IL

## ***Community and Caregiver Educational Events***

**April 7, 2010** **8th Annual Family Caregiver Symposium, 4:30-9 p.m.**  
**Effingham Knights of Columbus**

Effingham, IL

Contact: Trisha Katt, Heartland Human Services, 217.347.7179, extension 1062

**April 15, 2010** **Healthy Lifestyles Fair, 8-11 a.m.**  
**West Frankfort Aquatic Center**

West Frankfort, IL

Contact: Whitney Mehaffy, Bi-County Health Department, 618.439.0951.

**April 21, 2010** **Caregiver Health Fair & Spa, 2-5 p.m.**  
**The Depot**

Flora, IL

Contact: Trisha Katt, Heartland Human Services, 217.347.7179, extension 1062

**May 1, 2010** **May Day! May Day! SOS for Caregivers, 7:45 a.m.–1 p.m.**  
**Nuttall Middle School**

Robinson, IL

Contact: Juanita Suro, Southeastern Illinois Counseling Center, 618.395.4306.

**June 11, 2010** **Senior Fest Date Saver**  
**John A. Logan College**

Carterville, IL

Contact: Nancy Muzzarelli, Senior Action Team, 618-956-9509

## Questions or Comments? Contact the Gero-Psych Specialist in your area.

### Heartland Human Services (Green)

Contact Person: Linda Warner, EdM, QMHP  
P.O. Box 1047, 1200 N. Fourth St.  
Effingham, IL 62401  
217.347.7179 x 1046  
Email: [lwarner@heartlandhs.org](mailto:lwarner@heartlandhs.org)  
Website: [www.heartlandhs.org](http://www.heartlandhs.org)

### Southeastern Illinois Counseling Centers, Inc. (Blue)

Contact Person: Juanita Suro, MA, LCPC  
P.O. Drawer M, 504 Micah Drive  
Olney, IL 62450  
618.395.4309 x 230  
Email: [jjsuro@msn.com](mailto:jjsuro@msn.com)  
Website: [www.seicc.org](http://www.seicc.org)

### The H Group (Peach)

Contact Person: Lynn Tadda, LCSW  
902 West Main Street  
West Frankfort, IL 62896  
618.937.6483 x7504  
Email: [lynn.tadda@Hgroup.org](mailto:lynn.tadda@Hgroup.org)

