Seniors

Substance abuse by older adults is an “invisible epidemic”. As baby boomers age, the number of older adults who abuse alcohol and drugs is expected to increase. About one-third of older addicts started abusing drugs and alcohol following a traumatic event (e.g., loss of spouse). (SAMHSA)

Seniors at Risk

- Hip fractures in the elderly increase with alcohol consumption.
- The elderly are especially prone to the dangers of mixing alcohol and medications.
- Seniors are at risk of prescription drug abuse due to long-term use of addictive drugs such as those for joint pain and insomnia.
- Nearly 30% of those aged 57-85 use at least five prescriptions.

Treatment

By the year 2020, the number of persons needing treatment for a substance use disorder will double among persons aged 50 or older. Substance abuse in seniors often goes unrecognized, and therefore untreated. (SAMHSA)

- Seniors need programs tailored to their life experiences and strengths, and sensitive to their cultural and gender differences.
- The shame of addiction is harder for this age group to accept.
- Therapies are more successful when they place individuals with similar life experiences together, so causes of addiction and patterns of relapse can be openly discussed.
- Older adults with prior treatment experience often leave programs prematurely because they do not identify with younger peers. (Therapeutic Communities of America)

Local Programs

- Hanley Center’s for Older Adult Recovery is the first 12-Step based drug and alcohol rehabilitation center designed specifically for adults 55 and over. 70% of patients at the Hanley Center are baby boomers.
- Florida Brief Intervention and Treatment for Elders (BRITE) Program
- Senior Friendship Centers
Smoking Cessation

Older smokers are less likely than younger smokers to attempt quitting, but they are more likely to be successful. (NCBI) Read more: Never Too Old to Quit

Florida’s Quitline offers free counseling, nicotine patches or gum, and more. Call 877.822.6669.

Prevention Tips
- Use the same physician and pharmacy; avoid doctor shopping
- Use a pill organizer.
- Bring someone with you to medical appointments.
- Healthy individuals over 65 should limit to no more than 3 drinks on any day and 7 per week. (NIAAA)

See more tips in Prescription Drugs.

Read more:
- Alcohol Use In Older People
- Alcoholism, Drug Addiction Among Seniors Expected To Triple By 2020
- Boomers on Drugs