

# Home Accidents and Alcohol

## The Risks as You Get Older

**Alcohol is the biggest cause of fatal accidents at home. 4,000 fatal home accidents happen in the UK every year - 1 in 10 are alcohol-related<sup>2</sup>.**

In Northern Ireland 2 people die each week from home accidents.

Seventy percent of fatal accidents are caused by falls among people 65yrs and over<sup>1</sup>.

### **As you get older you are:**

- **more likely** to have a home accident, particularly falls. Excessive alcohol use can also increase the risk of osteoporosis and fractures (broken bones).
- **more likely** to be taking several medications. Taking four or more medicines is known to increase your risk of a fall. If taken with alcohol, medication can cause adverse side-effects leading to falls and other accident types eg fires, poisonings.
- **less able** to handle alcohol. The body's composition of muscle and fat changes as we age and our organs and brains become less efficient at breaking down or coping with alcohol.
- **more likely** to be facing life changing circumstances that can bring about a later-in-life dependency on alcohol eg bereavement, retirement, illness, loneliness. With fewer family or work responsibilities there may be less pressure to give up drinking.

### **Alcohol slows down your brain which means you are more likely to have an accident. Drinking alcohol can:**

- affect our **judgement** and **reasoning**
- slow down our **reactions**
- upset our sense of **balance** and **coordination**
- impair our **vision** and **hearing**
- make us **lose concentration** and feel **drowsy**<sup>2</sup>.

### **Alcohol affects your thinking making you more likely to take risks.**

Alcohol can **make you do things** you wouldn't normally do if you were sober or you mistakenly **over-estimate your own abilities**.



# 3 Easy Ways to Reduce Your Alcohol Intake

**Set clear drinking limits. As well as accidents older people who drink too much are more at risk of a range of other physical and mental health issues including; stroke; heart disease; cancer; depression; confusion or dementia.**

1. Have regular **alcohol-free days** - make a **mocktail** (an alcohol free cocktail)  
<http://allrecipes.com/recipes/1822/drinks/mocktails/>
2. **Cut back** on quantity - choose smaller servings or dilute your drink with a spritzer. Switch to soft drinks during an evening out.
3. **Pay attention** to what you're buying.  
Look for lower alcohol by volume (ABV) products eg have a 10% wine rather than 14%.

## For further information:

[www.knowyourlimits.info/](http://www.knowyourlimits.info/) (alcohol)

[www.southerntrust.hscni.net/falls.htm](http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net/falls.htm) (falls directory)

**Drinkline** for a Free and Confidential Chat: **Tel: 0300 123 1110**

**AddictionNI** (Alcohol and Drug Treatment Charity) **Tel: 028 9066 4434**

## Falls?

If you have had a fall or are concerned about falling call the Southern Trust Falls Clinic for a Risk Assessment by the Falls Coordinator on: **Tel: 028 3741 2326.**



## National Osteoporosis Society

[www.nos.org.uk](http://www.nos.org.uk)

Freephone 0808 800 0035

(for advice, information and support)



## References

- 1) Home Accident Prevention Strategy for Northern Ireland 2015-2025
- 2) The facts about alcohol and accidents. [www.drinkaware.co.uk](http://www.drinkaware.co.uk)