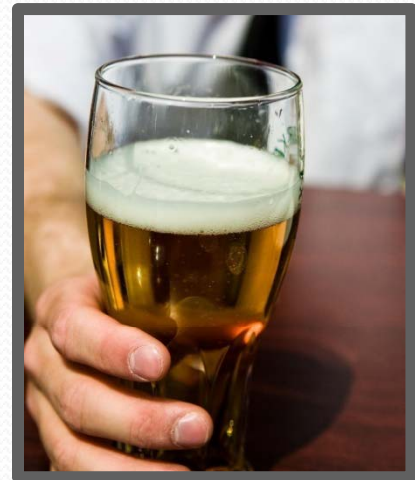


Substance Abuse and Older Adults



Today's presentation

- The growing problem
- Why diagnosing the problem can be challenging
- Understanding misuse as well as abuse
- Treatment for older adults
- Prevention programs for older adults



The growing problem...nationally

- Adults 60 and older make up the fastest growing group of Americans affected by substance abuse
- As many as one in six are over-dependent on alcohol
- A growing type of abuser is the “late-onset alcoholic,” who shows no sign of alcoholism until a major life change triggers drinking after age 50



The growing problem...nationally

- Interaction between alcohol and other drugs is a major concern since 50 percent of seniors are light or moderate drinkers
- Men are more likely to abuse alcohol than women



The growing problem...in NJ

- In NJ, it is estimated that there are 112,000 senior alcoholics and another 250,000 senior alcohol abusers.
- Though overall treatment admissions declined between 1992 and 2001, admissions for adults 60 and older increased from 514 in 1992 to 1,202 in 2001.
- 80% of treatment admissions are alcohol-related.

New Jersey Drug and Alcohol Treatment, published by the NJ Dept. of Human Services, Division of Addiction Services, 2003



Beyond a problem with alcohol

- 17% of adults 60 and over are abusing alcohol and prescribed or OTC medications
- 70% of OTC medications and 25-40% of prescription medications are purchased by adults aged 60 and over
- In 2001, 1.7 million adults age 50 and over were abusing or dependent on a substance. That number is expected to increase to 4.4 million by 2020.



Diagnosing the problem

Older adults:

- Often drink alone
- Are less likely to be stopped for drunk driving or involved in an alcohol-related accident
- Are not as likely to have job, marital or family problems caused by substance use as their younger counterparts
- May exhibit symptoms that are mistaken for senility



Diagnosing the problem

- Doctors may be less likely to ask them about the alcohol use
- Family members may not see any harm in letting them “have a little fun”
- Family members may not know what medications they are taking , if they are taking them properly, or if they should be avoiding alcohol when on these medications



Alcohol and the older adult

Alcohol use can:

- Cause slower reaction times
- Feel more potent as you age because your body metabolizes it differently
- Put seniors at greater risk for falls, car accidents and other injuries



Alcohol PLUS other medications

- More than 150 medications negatively interact with alcohol and may result in increased risk of illness, injury or even death
- Alcohol's effects are heightened by medications that depress the central nervous system, such as sleeping pills, antihistamines, anti-depressants, anti-anxiety drugs and some painkillers



Common ways seniors misuse alcohol and prescription drugs

- Taking alcohol with medication when the prescription bottle or a doctor tells says not to
- Taking prescription medicine in a manner other than how your doctor prescribed
 - Once a day instead of three times a day...or the opposite
 - Discontinuing a medication earlier than the doctor prescribed
- Sharing medication with a family member or friend



Treatment programs for seniors

- Programs in many states are being designed specifically for seniors
- Are more likely to successfully complete the program
- Many aren't used to sharing their feelings
- Feel more comfortable with people their own age
- While alcohol is the #1 problem, problems are increasing with opiates, cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamines and prescription drugs like Xanax and Oxycontin



Preventing problems before they start

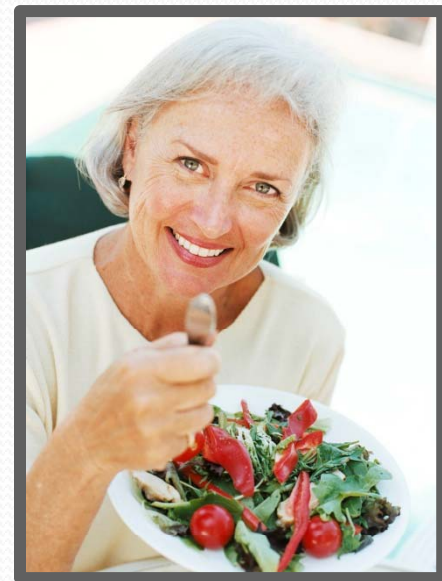
Seniors need to be educated

- How lifestyle choices effect health
 - Smoking
 - Exercise
 - Diet
- The importance of taking medications as directed and knowing the possible side effects they may experience
- How alcohol can effect older adults differently and the risks it can pose



Prevention programs that can help

- NJPN's WISE Program- substance abuse prevention/health and wellness program
 - Six lessons
 - Interactive, group activities
- Take Control of Your Health- chronic disease self-management program
 - Six lessons
 - Interactive, group activities



The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- **Goal:** Help older adults celebrate healthy aging, make healthy life choices, and avoid substance abuse
 - Positively impact participants in three key areas:
 - Knowledge
 - Behavior
 - Social Support



The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson One: “Understanding the Changes Associated with Aging”
 - Focuses on what contributes to the aging process and how we can live longer, happier, healthier lives
 - Facts and myths of aging
 - Top ten causes of death
 - What places seniors at risk for premature death and how to avoid these risks
 - The risk of depression among seniors



The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Two: “Aging Sensitivity”
 - Explores what it means to age in our larger society and for each of us personally
 - Biological changes associated with aging
 - Personal feelings about aging
 - Advantages of growing older



The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Three: “Valuing Cultural and Generational Diversity”
 - Examines diversity among seniors
 - Concepts of culture and diversity
 - Cultural identifications and how they impact our values and how we interact
 - Diversity among senior citizens
 - Assumptions people make about various cultural groups and how they affect interaction



The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Four: “Medication and the Older Adult”
 - Focuses on how to prevent medication misuse among older adults
 - Prevalence of medication use among older adults
 - Behaviors that lead to medication misuse
 - How to manage medication use
 - Drugs commonly used by older adults, typical adverse reactions and age-related changes in how drugs are metabolized
 - How to relate critical information to health care providers



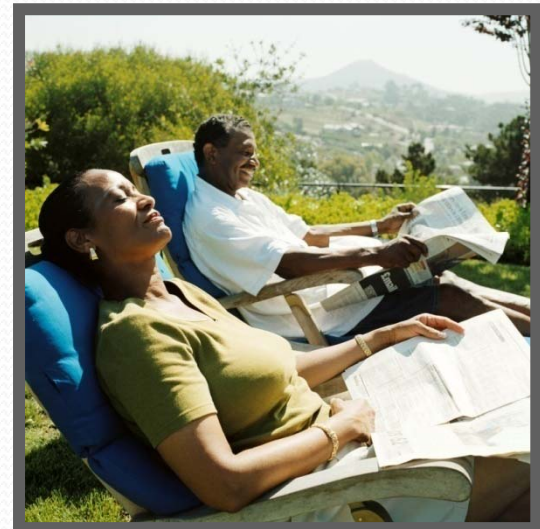
The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Five: “Addiction, ATOD and the Older Adult”
 - Explores the disease of addiction
 - Identify signs of alcohol abuse among seniors
 - Review the effects of ATOD use and abuse
 - Examine the health risks of and treatment options for addiction problems
 - Identify risk factors as well as protective factors for older adults



The WISE Six-lesson Curriculum

- Lesson Six: “An Enhanced Quality of Life”
 - Examine new ways to improve and enhance the quality of life as we grow older
 - Strategies for maintaining a healthy lifestyle
 - Personal stress triggers
 - How personal values influence the way we think and act



WISE Program Evaluation Results

Participants told us they:

- Increased their knowledge about medications
- Increased their knowledge about alcohol
- Felt more confident in their ability to manage their health issues
- Adopted a more assertive relationship with their physician and more likely to ask their doctor questions



WISE Program Evaluation Results

Participants told us they:

- Developed a more positive outlook on aging and coping with aging issues
- Changed their doctor and/or their pharmacy, got more involved with their doctor, asked for a reduction in their medications, got off unnecessary medications, and were more careful about taking their medications



WISE Program Evaluation Results

Participants told us they:

- Felt the lessons provided an open and comfortable atmosphere to express their feelings, including things they don't usually talk about
- Felt they obtained a substantial amount of good information relevant to the life issues of older adults and enjoyed learning from each other
- Came out of their shells and had their spirits lifted



WISE Evaluation Results

Key Findings

- WISE Program participants increased their knowledge regarding how their bodies age, how the aging process affects their ability to metabolize alcohol and medications, and how to recognize the early signs and symptoms of depression.
- WISE participants were more likely to improve health behaviors related to lifestyle choices, health care empowerment, and use of prescription and over-the-counter medications.
- WISE participants who completed the WISE Program reported greater increases in social support over time.



Thank you for your time

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