



In Care of You

A newsletter for Caregivers from Greene County Council on Aging

May 2023

Self-care for the Caregiver: Alcohol

Caregivers are often stressed emotionally and feel there is a scarcity of time available to care for themselves let alone all the things they need to do to take care of their loved ones. Caregivers often like to relax at the end of the day with an adult beverage to help them wind down for the day. Unfortunately, that drink or two at the end of the day may be doing more harm to one's body than good. Since being a caregiver is a difficult job, caregivers need to be in good health, both physically and emotionally, in order to really do a good job, to be safe, and to reduce their risk of burn out and illness.

According to Dr. Jennifer Ashton in her book *The Self-Care Solution*, limiting alcohol consumption improves our physical and mental health in a variety of ways.

First, alcohol in the blood system increases one's level of estrogen and other hormones, in an unhealthy way which, can increase a woman's breast cancer risks. Note: most caregivers are women.

Second, alcohol is full of empty calories, drinking leads to weight gain which is also associated with raising one's cancer risk – not just breast cancer, but esophageal, stomach, colon, and liver cancers.

Third, alcohol consumption messes with one's sleep. Alcohol can relax and help one get to sleep but results in being sedated, which blocks REM sleep that is need for overall health.

Forth, Alcohol interferes with liver function which can lead to cancer and skin issues. It inhibits

absorption of Vitamin A which helps the body produce collagen which helps one's skin be plump and elastic. Alcohol also triggers inflammation in the body.

Fifth, Alcohol is a depressant and can negatively impact existing mental illnesses or lead to depression. Since caregiving can also lead to depression, caregivers don't need to inflict this double whammy upon themselves.

And Lastly, drinking too much may not make one the best caregivers. Waking up hung over is not a good way to start a caregiving day. It can reduce our level of patience and can lead to resentment and frustration on the part of the caregiver.

Dr Ashton stated that people tend to underreport their use of alcohol by 76%, partly because people don't really know what a serving size is. An official serving size of a glass of wine is 5 ounces.

Dr Ashton recommends taking a 30-day break from alcohol just to see how it feels both in body and mind, and then be more mindful once one resumes drinking again by limiting alcohol intake to no more than 1-2 drinks per week.

She suggests finding other ways to relax. Such as getting exercise, reading, engaging in hobbies like drawing, knitting, talking on the phone with others. This is important because once one has their first drink of the day, ambition for other activities tends to fall by the wayside.



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Providing support for those who support others

Helpful Hints: Adaptive Clothing

Dressing individuals with dementia can be challenging, as their condition often impacts how they respond to cues or instructions. Adaptive clothing is specially designed for people with mobility issues and dementia to aid ease of dressing. There is a variety of adaptive clothing available that cater to the safety and dignity of these individuals. These pieces typically feature zipper pulls, hidden magnets, or velcro closures or snaps. Long sleeved options are available to help protect skin from scrapes and scratches. They also address incontinence issues via moisture-wicking fabrics, and curb undressing behaviors by fastening in back or the side, out of eyesight. Additional advantages include:

- Velcro closures that are easier for people with reduced coordination skills to fasten without assistance, promoting independence
- Elastic waistbands that accommodate changes in weight

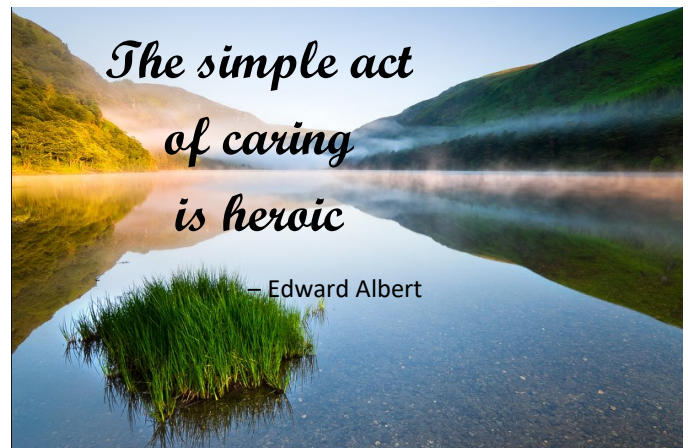
When selecting adaptive clothing for persons living with dementia, it's important to think about color, pattern and texture.

- **Color** can affect a person's emotions; while bold colors can be stimulating, muted tones may bring comfort and feelings of safety.
- **Patterns**; busy patterns can cause agitation or confusion. Simple geometric shapes (stripes, checks) are easily recognizable and comfort the individual.

- **Texture** should be soft materials that will not cause skin irritation or static electricity (polyester fabrics)

Source: Graying with Grace Scott Grant, CSA, SHSS, ATP 4/4/23

Online stores offer a variety of items to aid dressing, including non-skid socks and shoes, side snap shirts, elastic waist pants, and more. It's also a way to find the most cost-friendly items by comparing websites. By going online and searching for "Adaptive Clothing", you'll find a multitude of store options.



Support Groups

- 1st & 3rd Mondays of the month at 6pm, First Presbyterian Church, 314 Xenia Ave, Yellow Springs
- 1st Tuesday of month at 11:30 am, GCCOA Xenia office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beavercreek

Weekly Radio Segment: Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm, WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500