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Alcohol Awareness



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What Is Alcoholism? Differences between dependence and abuse.

Alcoholism is a lifelong illness. People with alcoholism, or alcohol dependence, crave alcohol, and as their tolerance grows, they need to drink more to achieve the same “buzz.” Alcohol is a drug.

In addition to cravings and tolerance, alcoholism includes these symptoms:

- » **Loss of control.** A person cannot stop drinking once he or she has started.
- » **Physical dependence.** Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness and anxiety, occur when alcohol use is stopped.

IS ALCOHOL ABUSE DIFFERENT FROM ALCOHOLISM?

Yes, alcohol abuse is different from alcoholism, but it can be just as dangerous. People who abuse alcohol may drink too much alcohol at a time and drink too often. You may know someone who abuses alcohol who has problems at work, at home or with the law because of problem drinking. People who abuse alcohol may not be dependent on it and have alcoholism. But people who abuse alcohol have a higher risk of developing alcoholism.



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For people who choose to drink, doctors usually recommend no more than one drink a day for women and no more than two drinks a day for men.

DOES ALCOHOL ABUSE CAUSE THE SAME PROBLEMS AS ALCOHOLISM?

A problem drinker or alcohol abuser may not be addicted to alcohol, but he or she shares many of the same health risks.

Quality of life, in particular, can be severely lessened. In addition, alcoholics and alcohol abusers alike may bring havoc into the lives of their loved ones and on others around them.

Studies show that alcoholism and alcohol abuse are not only a leading cause of death but also a significant factor in violent crime, teen pregnancy, date rape and certain other types of crime.

HOW CAN I KNOW IF I HAVE AN ALCOHOL PROBLEM?

Ask yourself the following questions. You may want to print this article so you can check off any symptoms you find in yourself.

In the past year, have you had times when:

You ended up drinking more or longer than you intended?

Y or N

More than once, you wanted to cut down or stop drinking, or tried to, but could not?

Y or N

More than once, you have been in situations while or after drinking that increased your chances of getting hurt (such as driving, swimming, using machinery, walking in a dangerous area or having unsafe sex)?

Y or N

You had to drink much more than you once did to get the effect you want? Or found that your usual number of drinks had much less effect than before?

Y or N

You continued to drink even though it made you feel depressed or anxious or added to another health problem? Or after having had a memory blackout?

Y or N

You spent a lot of time drinking? Or being sick or getting over other after-effects?

Y or N

You continued to drink even though it was causing trouble with your family or friends?

Y or N



You found that drinking – or being sick from drinking – often interfered with taking care of your home or family? Or caused job troubles or school problems?

Y or N

You have given up or cut back on activities that were important or interesting to you, or gave you pleasure, in order to drink?

Y or N

More than once, you have been arrested, been held at a police station or had other legal problems because of your drinking?

Y or N

You found that when the effects of alcohol were wearing off, you had withdrawal symptoms, such as trouble sleeping, shakiness, restlessness, nausea, sweating, a racing heart or a seizure? Or sensed things that were not there?

Y or N

Note: *These questions were taken from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) website and are based on symptoms used by the American Psychiatric Association to diagnose alcohol use disorders.*

If you have answered “yes” to any of the above questions, you may have a problem with alcohol. The more symptoms you have, the more urgent is your need for help.

Take this test to your doctor to talk about your concerns. He or she can look at your answers to tell whether you have an alcohol problem. Several therapies are available to help people stop drinking, including counseling, medications and support groups.

Recognizing symptoms, being honest about them and making a change is tough for many people. People with a drinking problem must decide for themselves when to quit. For many, that decision to quit comes only after an arrest, divorce or other tragic scenario.

You can make positive steps even if you are not ready to quit drinking. You might want to:

- » Keep track of how much and when you drink.
- » Make a list of all of the consequences of continuing to drink.
- » Look at situations that may be contributing to a drinking problem, such as stress, lifestyle, peer pressure, habits or other factors.
- » Talk to someone you trust about making a change.

Why Alcohol Misuse Is Dangerous



Drinking alcohol in excess is a risky behavior that can have lasting effects on your health.

Every two minutes, someone dies because of alcohol. In fact, excessive drinking is the third-leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the United States. Drinking alcohol is linked to more than 60 health issues.

When you drink in excess, the effects of alcohol aren't limited to just you. Your drinking can also hurt someone else. Half of all alcohol-related deaths are due to unintentional injuries, such as from car accidents, for example.

EXCESSIVE DRINKING DEFINED

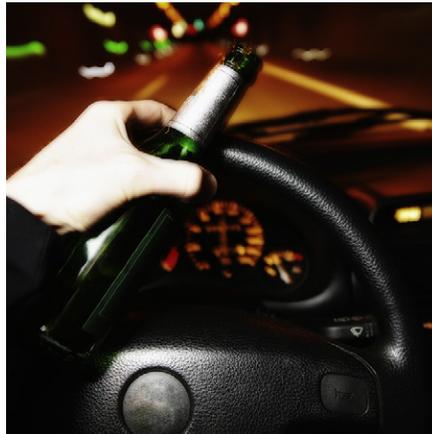
Heavy drinking and binge drinking fall under the category of "excessive drinking."

Heavy drinking:

- » More than one drink per day on average for women.
- » More than two drinks each day on average for men.

Binge drinking:

- » More than four drinks during one time (generally in a two-hour period) for women.
- » More than five drinks during one occasion for men.



One drink is considered:

- » 12 oz. of beer or a wine cooler
- » 5 oz. of wine
- » 1.5 oz. of distilled liquor (for example, vodka, rum or whiskey)

A PERSONAL PROBLEM: HOW ALCOHOL MISUSE HURTS YOU

When you drink alcohol, it's quickly absorbed from the stomach and small intestine and into the bloodstream. The liver can only break down (metabolize) a small amount of alcohol at a time. The rest of the alcohol lingers in the bloodstream and causes you to "feel drunk." This harms the central nervous system (the brain and spinal cord), which is dangerous because the central nervous system controls all functions of the body. The more

alcohol you drink at once, the greater the damage.

The immediate effects of alcohol may include:

- » Impaired judgment and inability to measure risks
- » Lowered inhibitions
- » Slower reaction time and reflexes
- » Loss of coordination and balance
- » Distorted vision
- » Lapses in memory

Drinking too much alcohol over time can cause a slew of lasting health problems, such as:

- » Chronic liver disease
- » Cancer
- » Heart disease and stroke
- » Mental health issues, such as depression and anxiety
- » Alcohol addiction
- » Medical problems in unborn babies if any amount of alcohol is consumed during pregnancy.
- » Alcohol poisoning, which can be deadly. This can happen when you drink too much at once.

Alcohol misuse can also impact other areas of your life. It's linked with: ►

- » Domestic abuse and other violent behaviors
- » Relationship issues
- » Risky sexual behaviors
- » Financial problems
- » Being unproductive at work
- » Accidents

A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM: HOW ALCOHOL MISUSE HURTS OTHERS

Excessive alcohol use hurts us all. It reaches into every aspect of society and has an economic impact as well.

Look at the facts:

- » One-fifth to one-half of all car accident deaths are due to alcohol.
- » Of people admitted to hospitals (not counting those in maternity or intensive care units), 25 percent to 40 percent are being treated for alcohol-related issues.
- » Alcohol problems cost the United States about \$185 billion per year. Health care expenses for alcohol-related illness and injury cost \$22.5 billion each year.
- » Underage drinking is a huge public health problem:
- » Alcohol is a leading cause of death and injury in teens from car accidents, fires, drownings, homicides and suicides.
- » When teens drink, nine out of 10 times they are binge drinking.
- » One in four teens admits to binge drinking.
- » Three in 10 teens admit to riding in a vehicle with a driver who has been drinking.

BE RESPONSIBLE

If you are 21 years of age or older and choose to drink, do so in moderation. Women should only have one drink per day, and men should limit alcohol to two drinks each day. It is not safe to drink any amount of alcohol during pregnancy.

Never drink alcohol before or while driving, or when participating in any other activities that require skill or concentration.



Avoiding Alcohol: How to Say “No”

It can be hard to avoid alcohol at social events like weddings, parties or other occasions. Here’s how to politely decline a drink.

If you’ve struggled with an alcohol problem, you know how important it is to resist temptation when you’re at a party or out with friends. Despite knowing your history, friends may still encourage you to “have just one.” Those who don’t know you may even insist, or perhaps tease you about your decision to abstain. How can you say no without making a big deal of it?

Recovering alcoholics aren’t the only ones who face this challenge. Anyone who chooses to avoid alcohol may have to deal with peer pressure. If you’re a teenager, a designated driver, take certain medications, have certain religious beliefs, or just don’t want to drink, you need to know how to turn down a drink.

The key is to refuse offers of liquor politely yet firmly, without feeling guilty or making apologies. If someone persists, change the subject or excuse yourself. Don’t let yourself be pestered or ridiculed for your choice.

HAVE A STRATEGY

If you are going to a wedding, a holiday party or just out with co-workers at the end of the week, it’s a good bet there will be alcohol. Before you go, think about different ways you can say “no.” Rehearse what you will say ahead of time. This will help you respond better when someone offers you a drink or asks what’s in your glass.

- » Keep it simple. Just saying “no thanks” might be enough. Use a small gesture like a hand wave or head shake to emphasize your decision.
- » Offer an explanation. Be honest about your reasons if you feel comfortable enough. Otherwise, explain that you just feel better when you don’t drink. You could even say you stopped drinking at your doctor’s advice.
- » Suggest an alternative. Instead of alcohol, say you’d love a sparkling water or mix of club soda and juice instead. If you want to fend off further offers, leave a bit of the drink in your glass to show that you’re “still working on it.”
- » Have a nonalcoholic beer. Order an alcohol-free beer and pour it into a glass or cup. Without the label, no one will know that your drink isn’t a regular beer.

It can be hard to hold your ground when friends pressure you to drink with them. If you’d rather not be in that position at all, think about skipping events and get-togethers where alcohol will be served. To avoid feeling left out, arrange to meet up with friends and family in “safe” situations on your own terms.

You owe it to yourself to stay committed to your own health and well-being. Make the right decisions for yourself and don’t let others try to make them for you. Any embarrassment or uneasiness will be temporary, but the consequences of giving in can be long lasting.



Counting Calories in Alcoholic Beverages

If you're counting calories, think before taking that next drink. It could have more calories than your favorite dessert.

A cocktail before dinner or a glass or two of wine with the meal is so common that some people don't even give it a second thought. But if you're trying to watch calories, here is something to think about before you take that next alcoholic drink.

This may be news to some, but alcohol has a lot of calories, often more than the dessert you turn down. To boot, having a drink or two before or with a meal may actually stimulate you to eat more and take in more calories. Researchers speculate that alcohol increases the pleasure of eating. While "under the influence," it's also more likely that you will lose your inhibitions and indulge in foods that are less nutritious.

Without a doubt, the calories in your alcoholic drink can affect your waistline just as the alcohol can affect your mental functioning and physical health. But you can enjoy small amounts of alcohol and still maintain or even lose weight. The key? Arm yourself with calorie facts and follow the tips below.

HOW MANY CALORIES ARE YOU DRINKING?

Weight gain, loss or maintenance depends on how many calories you take in. Most people are completely unaware of how many calories are in certain drinks. It's easy to go overboard without realizing it.

The calorie amounts listed here are for an average size drink. Many drinks may have even more, depending on how big the tumbler, glass or beer mug is.

Drink	Amount	Calories
Beer (regular)	12 oz.	150
Beer (light)	12 oz.	100
Daiquiri	10 oz.	300
Eggnog	8 oz.	350
Kahlua	1.5 oz.	140
Long Island iced tea	10 oz.	580
Martini	6 oz.	280

Drink	Amount	Calories
Margarita	8 oz.	420
Pina colada	10 oz.	550
Screwdriver	8 oz.	190
Shot of liquor (gin, rum, vodka, whiskey)	1.5 oz.	100
Whiskey sour	8 oz.	375
White Russian	8 oz.	500
Wine (red or white)	6 oz.	120

OTHER FACTS TO CONSIDER

Here are two more things to keep in mind about alcohol:

- » Alcohol can cause dehydration. Make sure to drink plenty of water when you have alcohol. Your body is better able to process fat when it's properly hydrated.
- » Alcohol does not fill you up. Alcohol contains calories but doesn't typically make you full. This still leaves plenty of room for other indulgences.

STRATEGIES FOR SMART DRINKING

- » If you drink, do so only in moderation. This means no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women.
- » Check with your doctor before drinking alcoholic beverages if you take any medicines (over-the-counter or prescription) or if you have any medical problems.
- » Pay attention to the calories in alcohol. Know your facts so you can balance your calories for the day.
- » Never drink on an empty stomach. This will lead to faster absorption of the alcohol and even more impaired judgment.
- » Drink slowly and alternate each beverage with water or seltzer. This allows you to have something in your hand while spacing out your alcohol intake.
- » Dilute alcohol with water, ice or seltzer. This avoids the extra calories found in mixers, sodas and juices.
- » Trade a higher calorie drink for a lower one.
- » If you love eggnog, look for lower calorie versions in the supermarket.

In the end, a smart strategy includes a plan for both eating and drinking. With that in mind, it may be possible to include some alcohol in your meal plan without piling on the pounds.