

QUICK FACTS

- Alcohol dependence (also known as alcoholism) is a chronic disease. It is characterized by an uncontrollable urge to drink, inability to stop drinking once one has started, and the need to drink more and more to feel the same effects.
- Excessive drinking includes heavy drinking, binge drinking, or both.
- 1 in 6 American adults binge drink.
- 1 in 12 American adults fit the criteria for alcoholism or alcohol abuse.

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

- The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) defines the following as standard serving sizes for alcoholic beverages:
 - Beer: 12 fluid ounces.
 - Wine: 5 fluid ounces.
 - Liquor: 1.5 fluid ounces.
- Because men and women's bodies process alcohol in different ways, the recommended alcohol consumption limits are different for men and women.
- The NIAAA defines alcohol misuse in terms of excess daily consumption, excess total consumption, or both. Below are the NIAAA guidelines for excess consumption.
 - **Excess daily consumption:**
 - More than 4 drinks per day for men.
 - More than 3 drinks per day for women.
 - **Excess total consumption:**
 - More than 14 drinks per week for men.
 - More than 7 drinks per week for women.
 - **Any time that a person's alcohol consumption exceeds both the daily and weekly limits.**

RISKS OF EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE

- Unintentional injuries.
- Violence.
- Liver disease and heart disease.
- Strokes and dementia.
- Cancer.
- Lower work and school performance.
- Risky sexual behaviors and adverse pregnancy outcomes.

SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL MISUSE

- Memory loss and blackouts.
- Irritability and extreme mood swings.
- Making excuses for drinking.
- Choosing drinking over other responsibilities and obligations.
- Isolation from family and friends.
- Drinking alone or in secrecy.
- Feeling hungover when not drinking.
- Changes to appearance.
- Unsteady gait or lack of coordination.
- Diarrhea or bloating.
- Rapid heart rate.
- Excessive sleepiness.
- Slurred speech.
- Rapid, uncontrolled eye movement.
- Stupor or coma.

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RECOVERY IS POSSIBLE

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someone who can help.

SIGNS THAT YOU MAY BE MISUSING ALCOHOL

If you are worried about your use of alcohol, here are some questions you could ask yourself about your alcohol use. If you answer “yes” to some or most of the questions, then it is likely that you are using too much:

- Is your personality different when you drink?
- Do you drink to gain courage to face social situations?
- Has your drinking ever caused you to miss work or other appointments?
- Do you use alcohol to escape problems when you are upset?
- Is it hard for you to stop drinking after you have one or two drinks?
- Do you have times when you end up drinking more, or longer, than you intended?
- Once you start drinking, do you always end up drunk?
- Have you tried, and failed, to drink less alcohol or drink none at all?
- Have you ever wanted a drink so badly that you couldn't think about anything else?
- Do you sometimes have trouble remembering what you did while under the influence of alcohol?
- Have you continued to drink even though it was making you feel depressed or anxious, or was adding to another health problem?
- Have you continued to drink after experiencing an alcohol-related memory blackout?
- Do you spend a lot of time drinking, or being sick from drinking, or dealing with the aftereffects of drinking?
- Do you regret doing some of the things you've done under the influence?
- Have friends or family members tried to express their concern about your drinking?
- Has your work or school performance, or home or family life, suffered because of your drinking?
- Have you continued to drink even though it is causing trouble with your relationships?
- Have you needed a drink in the morning to get going after a night of heavy drinking?
- Have you given up or cut back on activities you found important, interesting, or pleasurable so you could drink?
- Have you gotten into situations during or after drinking that increased your chances of getting hurt (such as driving, swimming, using machinery, walking in a dangerous area, or unsafe sexual behavior)?
- Have 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?
- Have 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, feeling uneasy or unhappy, feeling low, feeling unwell in general, experiencing hallucinations, or having a seizure?

TAKE ACTION

If you have reason to believe that you or a loved one is exhibiting signs of alcohol abuse, dependence, or addiction, the sooner you address the issue, the better the outcome.

- You can reach out to your primary care physician or a mental health professional. Parents can also reach out to their child's school counselor or pediatrician.
- Remember that early intervention is always best for one's health and well-being.

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