

# Alcohol

*Imagine for a moment how much more enjoyable and productive life might be in the absence of excessive drinking.*

How much is  
**TOO MUCH,**  
and how often is  
**TOO OFTEN?**

Did you know you could have a drinking problem without being an alcoholic? You might not be completely dependent on alcohol, but if you still drink excessively, it can lead to serious problems. About 17 million U.S. adults have an Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), as well as about 3.4% of teens.

## HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

In the U.S., a standard drink contains 0.6 fluid ounces of pure alcohol. This translates to:

- 12 oz. of beer (5% alcohol content)
- 8 oz. malt liquor (7% alcohol content)
- 5 oz. wine (12% alcohol content)
- 1.5 oz. 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor (40% alcohol content)

Moderate drinking is defined as no more than one drink per day for women and two for men. For some people, it's advised to avoid alcohol completely. These include those who are:

- Pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- Taking prescription drugs that shouldn't be mixed with alcohol
- Younger than 21-years-old
- Recovering from alcoholism
- Experiencing a medical condition possibly affected by alcohol
- Planning to drive or complete other activities requiring alertness

## ALCOHOL'S EFFECTS

There are both short and long-term effects of excessive drinking and intoxication. Lowered inhibitions and interference with speech and muscle coordination are some of the short-term effects. Heavy binge drinking may impair your memory or even cause a coma or death. The effects of long-term excessive drinking include digestive problems, difficulty with sexual functioning, heart problems, liver disease, neurological problems, and an increased risk of cancer.

## SIGNS OF ALCOHOLISM

People who regularly binge drink or begin at an early age are at a high risk for alcoholism. Those with a family history of substance abuse and people who have a mental illness are also at risk. In addition, look for the following signs that indicate alcoholism:

- Inability to limit alcohol intake
- Hiding drinking habits from others
- Experiencing physical withdrawal symptoms
- Inability to remember conversations or events while drunk, known as "blackouts"
- Relationship, employment, or financial problems due to drinking
- Loss of interest in once pleasurable activities

## ACTION STEPS

- ✓ Provide your doctor with an honest and forthright report of your alcohol use.
- ✓ Seek out individual counseling from professionals specializing in addictions.
- ✓ Participate in support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.
- ✓ Make lifestyle changes to support reduced alcohol use or abstinence.
- ✓ Enlist the support of friends and family who are not also dependent on alcohol.

## KEEP IN MIND

Alcoholism and excessive drinking is not something to take lightly. If you or someone you know struggles with this, be courageous and seek help. Consider reaching out to your health care provider and engaging other counseling resources for guidance on next steps.

***What steps will you take today to be well and live life more fully?***