

Facts About Alcohol

Alcohol abuse is a pattern of drinking that could result in health or social problems. However, alcohol dependence, or alcoholism, refers to a disease that is characterized by abnormal alcohol-seeking behavior that leads to impaired control over drinking.

Short-term effects of alcohol use include:

- distorted vision, hearing, and coordination
- altered perceptions and emotions
- impaired judgment
- bad breath; hangovers

Long-term effects of heavy alcohol use include:

- loss of appetite
- vitamin deficiencies
- stomach ailments
- skin problems
- sexual impotence
- liver damage
- heart and central nervous system damage
- memory loss

How Do I Know If I or Someone Close to Me, Has a Drinking Problem?

Here are some quick clues:

- Inability to control drinking--it seems that regardless of what you decide beforehand, you frequently wind up drunk
- Using alcohol to escape problems
- A change in personality--turning from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde
- A high tolerance level--drinking just about everybody under the table
- Blackouts--sometimes not remembering what happened while drinking
- Problems at work or in school as a result of drinking
- Concern shown by family and friends about drinking

If you have a drinking problem, or if you suspect you have a drinking problem, there are many others out there like you, and there is help available.

Statistics Relating to Children of Alcoholics

- Seventy six million Americans, which is about 43% of the U.S. adult population, have been exposed to alcoholism in the family.

- Almost one in five adult Americans (18%) lived with an alcoholic while growing up.
- Roughly, one in eight American adult drinkers is alcoholic or experiences problems due to the use of alcohol. The cost to society is estimated to be in excess of \$166 billion each year.
- There are an estimated 26.8 million children of Alcoholics in the United States. Preliminary research suggests that over 11 million are under the age of 18.
- Children of alcoholics are four times more likely than children of non-alcoholics to develop alcoholism.
- Genetic factors play a major role in the development of alcoholism. There is an expanding base of literature which strongly supports a heritable basis for alcoholism and a range of family influences that may direct the development of children of alcoholics.
- Alcohol is a key factor in 68% of manslaughters, 62% of assaults, 54% of murders and attempted murders, 48% of robberies, and 44% of burglaries.
- A significant number of children in this country are being raised by addicted parents. State child protective service agencies confirmed that more than one million children are victims of child abuse and neglect each year, and state welfare records indicated that substance abuse is one of the top two problems exhibited by families in 81% of the reported cases.
- Studies suggest an increased prevalence of alcoholism among parents who abuse children.
- Existing research suggests alcoholism is more strongly related to child abuse than are other disorders, such as parental depression.
- In-patient admission rates for substance abuse for children of alcoholics are tripled compared to that of other children.
- In-patient admission rates for mental disorders for children of alcoholics are almost doubled compared to that of other children.
- Injuries for children of alcoholics are more than one and one-half times greater than those of other children.
- The rate of total health care costs for children of alcoholics is 32% greater than children from non-alcoholic families.
- One analysis of 6 year-olds, with demonstrated effects of second-trimester alcohol exposure, had lower academic achievement and problems with reading, spelling, and mathematical skills.
- Approximately 6 % of the offspring of alcoholic women have Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS); the FAS risk for offspring born after an FAS sibling, is as high as 70 percent.
- Those diagnosed as having Fetal Alcohol Syndrome had IQ scores ranging from 20-105 with a mean of 68. Subjects also demonstrated poor concentration and attention.

Binge Drinking Among Underage Persons

- A binge drinker is defined as a person who drank five or more drinks on the same occasion on at least one day in the past 30 days.

- In 2000, almost 7 million persons aged 12 to 20 were binge drinkers; that is, about one in five persons under the legal drinking age was a binge drinker.
- The rate of binge drinking among underage persons (19%) was almost as high as that among adults aged 21 or older (21%).
- Underage persons who reported binge drinking were 7 times more likely to report illicit drug use during the past month than underage persons who did not binge drink.

Alcohol-related Injuries

- Alcohol use is involved in about 25% to 50% of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation.
- Nearly two-thirds of children 15 and younger who died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes were riding with the drinking driver. Fewer than 20% of the children killed were properly restrained at the time of the crash, and that restraint use decreased as the driver's blood alcohol concentration increased.
- In 1998, 21% of drivers ages 15 to 20 who died in motor vehicle crashes had blood alcohol concentrations of at least 0.10%.
- Among young males, alcohol is a major factor in 50% of drownings.