

Let's be well

Alcohol abuse and dependence: Risks factors, health issues and resources for help



In the U.S., one in every 12 adults suffers from alcohol abuse or dependence. Are you or a family member at risk? Know the warning signs, how it can affect health and where to find help.

Alcohol affects everyone differently. Individual reactions can vary due to:

- Age, sex and race or ethnicity
- Weight or fitness level
- Amount of food in your stomach
- How quickly drinks were consumed
- Drugs or prescription medicine use
- Family history of alcohol problems

Moderate vs. heavy drinking: Where's the dividing line?

Moderate drinking means up to one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men (consumed on any single day, not an average over several days). Heavy drinking is defined as eight drinks or more per week for women and 15 drinks or more per week for men.

Are all heavy drinkers alcoholics? No. Here are the signs of alcoholism:

- Inability to limit drinking

- Continuing to drink despite the personal or professional problems it causes
- Needing to increase how much you drink to get the same effect
- Wanting a drink so badly you can't think of anything else

The dangers of intoxication and alcohol abuse:

- Impaired brain function resulting in poor judgment, reduced reaction time, loss of balance and motor skills, or slurred speech
- Increased risk of certain cancers, stroke and chronic diseases
- Violence (child maltreatment, homicide or suicide)
- Coma and death (due to rapid consumption of large amounts)

How to get help: Call the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service at 1-800-662-HELP to speak to a counselor and find treatment programs in your local community.

For more information visit:
[cdc.gov/alcohol](https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol)