

Drinking Alcohol

Drinking alcohol is very common in our society, but too much alcohol can be harmful to your physical and mental health. In the U.S., more than 17 million people are alcoholics or have alcohol problems. Every year, more than 100,000 Americans die from problems related to alcohol. About 79,000 people die from “excessive” alcohol use, and alcohol is involved in nearly half of all traffic deaths. Alcohol abuse is the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death.



How much is too much?

Moderate alcohol use is 1 drink a day for adult women and men over the age of 65. Adult men younger than 65 should have no more than 2 drinks per day.

Heavy drinking is more than 1 drink a day for women and men over the age of 65. For men younger than 65, it is more than 2 drinks a day.

Do you have an alcohol problem?

Do the following describe you? If yes, talk with your health care team about getting help.

- Drinking alone or in secret.
- Not remembering conversations or commitments. This is called “blacking out.”
- A habit of having drinks before, with, or after dinner. Do you become annoyed when this is changed or questioned?

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- Loss of interest in activities and hobbies that used to bring you pleasure.
- Feeling a need to drink.
- Becoming irritable around the time you usually drink, especially if there is no alcohol available.
- Keeping alcohol in unusual hiding places at home, at work, or in the car.
- Gulping drinks or ordering doubles. Do you drink to feel good, or do you have to drink to feel “normal”?
- Having problems with relationships, money, the law, or your job.
- Developing a tolerance to alcohol. Do you need to drink more just to feel alcohol’s effects?
- Experiencing physical withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, and shaking if you do not drink.

If you are having a problem with alcohol, talk with your health care team about getting help.

