

Hope & Healing

Alcohol Use and Abuse

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Millions of Americans enjoy an occasional alcoholic drink. Moderate drinking of beer, wine, or spirits is not associated with any health problems for most adults. With heavy drinking, however, the alcohol acts as a poison and the body suffers immediate effects. Over time, heavy drinking causes liver disease and a decline in brain function.

After tobacco, heavy drinking is the leading cause of premature death in America and the drinker is seldom the only victim. Highway, home and recreational deaths are a part of the price we pay.

Heavy drinkers are more likely to lose their jobs. Those who do not lose their jobs are out of work often enough to create a huge loss of productivity. The harm done to the drinkers' families in economic and psychological measures is huge.

New Attitudes About Alcohol _____

There is some good news; we are now drinking lighter forms of alcohol in shorter cocktail hours. More often we are deciding not to serve alcohol before dinner, and to take the car keys of a guest who has had too many drinks. The abuse of alcohol is now recognized as a serious and complicated problem. It is hoped that this new awareness will cause more and more heavy drinkers to seek help and come to terms with their addiction.

Alcohol in the Blood _____

The more alcohol you drink the greater will be the effect on your mind and body. A single drink is counted as five ounces of wine or 12 ounces of beer or one and one-half ounces of 80 proof spirits. Each of these puts the same amount of pure alcohol into the blood stream — about two-thirds of an ounce. Eating before or while drinking, especially if the food is fatty, slows the movement of alcohol into the blood. So, eating while drinking makes sense.

The alcohol in a bottle of beer, with the stomach empty, will begin to move into the blood stream right away. The body also begins to use the alcohol right away, but up to two hours are required before the entire alcohol in one drink can be removed. So, if you're drinking at the rate of one bottle of beer per hour, your blood alcohol will rise because the body can't use the alcohol up as fast as you're drinking it.

Once the alcohol is in the blood stream, nothing you can do will get rid of it any faster. You can't run it off, swim it off, or get rid of it by taking a cold shower, drinking coffee, or eating a meal.

The Blood Alcohol Concentration

When the blood alcohol level reaches 0.05% you begin to relax. At 0.08% you are feeling less stressed out. At 0.1% your speech and movements become clumsy. This is the level where most states' laws would call you intoxicated. Several states have changed their laws and they now consider 0.08% intoxication.

How quickly your blood alcohol level rises from 0 to 0.1% varies from one person to another and even in the same person under different circumstances. But, if you drink four drinks in two hours

you have a high chance of becoming intoxicated.

What Alcohol Does _____

Most of the drinker's immediate actions comes from the effect of alcohol on the brain. When under the influence of alcohol we make poor decisions, can't remember, are dull mentally, and our thoughts run together. We may feel that the first drink frees our spirits, only to be severely depressed by the fourth drink.

Alcohol works on our kidneys. We pass more water than we take in. This causes dehydration that causes a hangover (dry mouth, headache, sour stomach and exhaustion). Nothing helps a hangover except time. Black coffee will not. And another drink only adds to the misery.

The Effects Of Moderate Drinking

Drinking one or two drinks a day has not been linked to any significant health problems in most people. Up to two drinks a day is considered moderate drinking. In fact, some studies suggest that one or two drinks a day may protect against clogged arteries, but other studies have not been clear about this. At least it isn't clear enough to recommend to non-drinkers that they take up drinking for their arteries' sake.

Pregnancy _____

Pregnant women who drink heavily risk giving birth to a child with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome. Consequently, pregnant women, and those likely to become pregnant are advised to not drink at all.

The Effect of Heavy Drinking _____

A person who averages more than two drinks a day is considered a heavy drinker by experts.

• **Brain Damage**

Heavy drinking over many years causes the brain to shrink in size. Thinking becomes disorganized and irrational and there is a serious loss of memory.

• **Intestinal Damage**

Alcohol inflames the stomach, intestines, and pancreas. The appetite is lost. Vitamin and mineral shortages occur. Malnutrition can be severe.

• **Liver Damage**

With each drinking binge the liver swells and loses function. Jaundice develops. After repeated binges, the liver scars and cirrhosis of the liver develops. This can cause death. But, this damage can be slowed if the patient will quit drinking.

• **Heart Damage**

Half of all heavy drinkers have high blood pressure. Others develop deterioration of the heart muscle and heart failure.

• **Other Dangers**

Most heavy drinkers smoke. Tobacco abuse added to alcohol abuse increases the risk of mouth, throat and voice box cancer.

Women Drinkers And Health Risks

Today 60% of women drink alcoholic beverages. They seem to develop liver problems with fewer drinks and in a shorter period of time than men.

Alcoholism _____

There is no way to predict ahead of time who will become an addict. Studies have shown that the use of four simple questions, known as the CAGE questions, have been successful in identifying the heavy drinker.

The CAGE Questions _____

Two yes answers to the questions below suggest excessive drinking. Three or four yes answers definitely identify a person with an alcohol problem.

1. Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?
2. Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
3. Have you ever felt guilty about your drinking?
4. Have you ever had to have an eye-opener, a drink first thing in the morning, to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hang-over?

Treating Alcohol Abuse _____

Increasingly alcohol has become treatable. Drinkers who join Alcoholics Anonymous, whose spouses join Al-Anon, and whose children join Ala-teen have a good chance of beating the disease. Whatever the approach, the critical factor is the drinker's desire to stop.

Summary _____

Remember, the pressure to drink may be in your imagination. More and more people are saying, "No thanks." If you do drink, keep up with the amount. If you believe you are developing a drinking problem, please seek professional help. And, no matter what else you do to help yourself, joining AA gives you a 70% success chance.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of What Can't Be Done

You may have a great idea, only to have your friends and family tell you, "It can't be done."

Don't believe them. Thousands of people have proved negative naysayers wrong and done what can't be done.

Other thousands have decided after a few failures that they truly can't do anything that succeeds. Sometimes they discuss their plans with others to the point that the telling of it kills the desire to do it.

The world has plenty can't be dones. They say, "I can't do it because of my health, my age, my lack of training, my family, the weather, the location, the recession." The excuses run on forever.

Take stock of yourself. Throw out all your can't be dones. You can truly do wonderful things for yourself and for your loved ones if you eliminate the can't be dones.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.