

Health Effects With Alcohol CONTINUED

The liver cells are damaged due to recent heavy drinking. On the other hand, liver cirrhosis is a result of long-term excessive alcohol use where large areas of the liver are destroyed and scarred.

Cardiomyopathy is a major health risk alcohol abusers will likely suffer. Long-term alcohol use creates damage and weakens the heart's muscular tissue resulting in heart failure.

Anemia and bleeding disorders can also result from chronic alcohol abuse.

Peptic ulcer disease is likely to develop in heavy drinkers. Alcohol can irritate the stomach lining and prolonged use can cause chronic stomach problems including peptic ulcers.

Answering yes to even one of these questions below may indicate a drinking problem.

During the last year, have you had a feeling of guilt or remorse after drinking?

During the last year, has a friend or family member ever told you about things you said or did while you were drinking that you could not remember?

During the last year, have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of drinking?

Do you sometimes take a drink when you first get up in the morning?

You are at risk of drinking too much if:

- A woman has more than three drinks at one time or more than seven standard drinks a week
- A man has more than four drinks at one time or more than fourteen standard drinks a week

A standard drink is one can or bottle of beer, one glass of wine, or one mixed drink of hard liquor.

How are alcohol problems diagnosed and treated?

Your doctor may diagnose alcohol abuse and dependence by asking questions about your symptoms and past health. He or she will give you a physical exam and sometimes a mental health assessment. Keep in mind that you will have to honestly answer questions about your drinking for your doctor to help you. Further testing may be done to look for other health problems related to alcohol.

Admitting that you have a drinking problem may be hard, but it is the first step to recovery. Although starting to drink again is common, alcohol problems can be overcome.

Most people need help to stay sober. This can come from counseling or a support group, such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Staying sober is a lifelong process.

Alcohol Disorder



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What is Alcohol Disorder?

Alcohol disorder is a disorder characterized by the excessive consumption of and dependence on alcoholic beverages, leading to physical and psychological harm and impaired social functioning. According to a recent study done by researchers at the Center for Addiction and Mental Health, alcohol abuse costs each Canadian \$463 annually.

A large survey showed that about 75% of Canadians drank alcohol in the last year. Many people who misuse alcohol have occasional problems in their lives because of alcohol such as social/family, legal, health or financial difficulties. Some people experience so many problems because of their drinking that they can be considered to have an alcohol disorder.

There are two types of alcohol disorders.

Alcohol Abuse—occurs when there are ongoing negative consequences from drinking

Alcoholism/Alcohol Dependence—is more severe and occurs when people have problems stopping drinking.

About 20% of men and 8% of women are alcohol dependent.



Symptoms of Alcohol Abuse

- Alcohol abuse interferes with responsibilities (example: at work, home, or school)
- Dangerous patterns of alcohol use (example: while driving a car or operating machinery)
- Alcohol use causes legal problems (example: arrests for disorderly conduct)
- Alcohol use continues despite negative effects on relationships (example: physical fights)

Symptoms of alcohol dependence

- Tolerance to alcohol (need more and more to get desired affect)
- Difficulty limiting or quitting drinking
- Great deal of time is spent in obtaining, using or recovering from alcohol
- Withdrawal when regular drinking is stopped or reduced (example: sweating, insomnia, nausea) Alcohol use continues despite awareness that drinking is causing physical or emotional problems.

Is alcoholism a disease?

Some experts believed that alcohol dependence is a disease that can't be cured, just like diabetes. This is known as the medical model. They believe that alcohol dependent people have no control over their alcohol use and that their disease can only be managed by avoiding alcohol altogether. Other experts argue that alcohol dependence is a psychological disorder rather than a disease. They do not believe that alcoholism is an incurable disease. Experts from this perspective believe that people attempting to recover from alcohol disorders can choose to stop drinking altogether or can learn to drink moderately instead.

Who is at risk for developing abuse/dependence?

If a person has a biological parent with alcohol dependence that person is at increased risk. Children may also learn patterns of heavy drinking from their parents. Those in cultures or social groups where heavy drinking is accepted (example: those working in bars) are at increased risk. However, it is still very difficult to predict precisely who will develop alcohol abuse/dependence.

Health risks with alcohol

Alcohol affects the brain and nervous system by slowing down the drinker's reactions and making him feel relaxed. Alcohol dulls the brain. When taken in higher doses, alcohol can cause mental block out, impairing the person's concentration and ability to judge situations properly.

The liver is one of the major targets of chronic alcohol abuse.