

Alcohol: Health Risks and Effects

Alcohol consumption is normal in our society, and it's perfectly okay assuming it's done in moderation. Drinking too much can have severe effects on your health, and can even be fatal. Avoiding alcohol-related causes is very easy if you practice restraint and learn the facts.

How Much is Too Much?

Excessive alcohol use comes in two forms: heavy drinking, defined by consuming an

average of over 2 drinks per day for men or an average of over 1 drink per day for women, and binge drinking, which is drinking 5 or more drinks during a single occasion for men or 4 or more drinks during a single occasion for women.

Whatever the method, consuming too much alcohol in any way can lead to an increased risk of health problems such as liver disease or unintentional injuries. On average, approximately 5% of the total population drinks heavily, while 15% of the population binge drink. Excessive alcohol use causes tens of thousands of deaths a year. In fact, drinking too much alcohol is the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death for Americans. What are the Effects?

The effects of alcohol vary on the amount that is consumed and the type of alcoholic beverage, as well as on the person – gender, age, body type, and other factors influence your reaction. However, excessive consumption always has some sort of physical and mental effect, both



initially and in the long-run: it affects every organ in the body.

Short-Term:

Alcohol is a depressant that impairs your senses, bodily functions, and judgment. As a result, it often leads to accidents, violence, and unintentional injuries – including fatal ones. Alcohol has been identified as a leading factor in cases of domestic abuse and child-maltreatment, while many incidents of unprotected sex, sex with multiple partners, and sexual assault are also tied to the influence of alcohol.

Among pregnant women (who should never drink any amount of alcohol) stillbirths and miscarriages can occur, and children can be born with permanent mental and physical health defects.

Alcohol poisoning, which occurs when too much alcohol is consumed, is a very real threat. Too much alcohol suppresses the central nervous system, causing loss of consciousness, low blood pressure and body temperature, coma, insufficient breathing, or

even death.

Long-Term:

Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases, neurological impairments and social problems. These include, but are not limited to, neurological problems, heart problems; gastrointestinal issues, increased risk of

depression, anxiety, and suicide; cancer of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, and breast; and various liver diseases such as hepatitis and cirrhosis. Learn more at <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/index.htm>

HIGHLIGHTS

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