

Alcohol Use and Your Health

Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use leads to about 88,000 deaths in the United States each year, and shortens the life of those who die by almost 30 years. Further, excessive drinking cost the economy \$223.5 billion in 2006. Most excessive drinkers are not alcohol dependent.

What is considered a “drink”?

U.S. Standard Drink Sizes



12 ounces
5% beer



8 ounces
7% malt liquor



5 ounces
12% wine

(examples: gin, rum,
vodka, whiskey)



1.5 ounces
40% (80 proof)
distilled spirits

Excessive alcohol use includes:



Binge Drinking

For women, 4 or more drinks
consumed on one occasion



For men, 5 or more drinks
consumed on one occasion



Heavy Drinking

For women, 8 or more drinks
per week



For men, 15 or more drinks
per week



Any alcohol used by pregnant women



Any alcohol used by those under the age of 21 years



If you choose to drink, do so in moderation:

FOR WOMEN, up
to 1 drink a day

FOR MEN, up to
2 drinks a day



DON'T DRINK AT ALL if you are
under the age of 21, or if you are or
may be pregnant, or have health
problems that could be made worse
by drinking.



NO ONE should begin drinking
or drink more frequently based
on potential health benefits.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Population Health



Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of many harmful health conditions. These are most often the result of binge drinking. Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems.

Short-Term Health Risks

Injuries

- Motor vehicle crashes
- Falls
- Drownings
- Burns

Violence

- Homicide
- Suicide
- Sexual assault
- Intimate partner violence

Alcohol poisoning

Reproductive health

- Risky sexual behaviors
- Unintended pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)



Long-Term Health Risks

Chronic diseases

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- Digestive problems

Cancers

- Breast
- Mouth and throat
- Liver
- Colon

Learning and memory problems

- Dementia
- Poor school performance

Mental health

- Depression
- Anxiety

Social problems

- Lost productivity
- Family problems
- Unemployment

Alcohol dependence