

Five empty, dark brown glass beer bottles are arranged in a circular pattern on a dark, textured surface. The bottles are viewed from above, with their necks pointing towards the center of the circle.

ALCOHOL AWARENESS

WHAT IS ALCOHOL?

Ethyl alcohol, or ethanol, is an intoxicating ingredient found in beer, wine, and liquor. Alcohol is produced by the fermentation of yeast, sugars, and starches.

Alcohol affects every organ in the body. It is a central nervous system depressant that is rapidly absorbed from the stomach and small intestine into the bloodstream. Alcohol is metabolized in the liver by enzymes. However, the liver can only metabolize a small amount of alcohol at a time, leaving the excess alcohol to circulate throughout the body. The intensity of the effect of alcohol on the body is directly related to the amount consumed.

WHAT IS A STANDARD DRINK SIZE IN THE UNITED STATES?

A standard drink is equal to 14.0 grams (0.6 ounces) of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in

- 12 ounces of beer (5% alcohol content).
- 8 ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol content).

- 5 ounces of wine (12% alcohol content).
- 1.5 ounces or a “shot” of 80-proof (40% alcohol content) distilled spirits or liquor (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey).

WHAT IS A MODERATE AMOUNT OF DRINKING CONSIDERED?

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, adults of legal drinking age can choose not to drink, or to drink in moderation by limiting intake to 2 drinks or less in a day for men and 1 drink or less in a day for women, when alcohol is consumed. Drinking less is better for health than drinking more.

WHAT ARE HEALTH PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH EXCESSIVE ALCOHOL USE?

Excessive drinking both in the form of heavy drinking or binge drinking, is associated with numerous health problems, including;

- Chronic diseases such as liver cirrhosis (damage to liver cells); pancreatitis (inflammation



of the pancreas); high blood pressure; and psychological disorders.

- Unintentional injuries, such as motor-vehicle traffic crashes, falls, drowning, burns, and firearm injuries.
- Violence, such as child maltreatment, homicide, and suicide.
- Harm to a developing fetus if a woman drinks while pregnant, such as fetal alcohol spectrum disorders.
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS).
- Alcohol use disorders.
- Increased risk of some cancers.

ARE YOU AT RISK?

Some factors that can make individuals vulnerable to consuming alcohol in excess include:

- Drinking behaviors before the age of 15
- Family history of alcohol problems
- Mental health conditions and a history of trauma

DO YOU NEED SUPPORT?

Can you take a 30-day break from drinking? If you are unable give up alcohol for one month, it may be time to rethink the relationship with alcohol.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE AT RISK?

Make an appointment with a healthcare provider. They will assess you to determine a healthy course of action. Assessments often ask about your alcohol choices. For example, in the past year, have you:

- Had times when you ended up drinking more, or longer, than you intended?
- More than once wanted to cut down or stop drinking, or tried to, but couldn't?

- Spent a lot of time drinking? Or being sick or getting over other aftereffects?
- Wanted a drink so badly you couldn't think of anything else?
- Found that drinking—or being sick from drinking—often interfered with taking care of your home or family? Or caused job troubles? Or school problems?
- Continued to drink even though it was causing trouble with your family or friends?
- Given up or cut back on activities that were important or interesting to you, or gave you pleasure, in order to drink?
- More than once gotten into situations while or after drinking that increased your chances of getting hurt (such as driving, swimming, using machinery, walking in a dangerous area, or having unprotected sex)?
- Continued to drink even though it was making you feel depressed or anxious or adding to another health problem? Or after having had a memory blackout?
- Had to drink much more than you once did to get the effect you want? Or found that your usual number of drinks had much less effect than before?
- Found that when the effects of alcohol were wearing off, you had withdrawal symptoms, such as trouble sleeping, shakiness, restlessness, nausea, sweating, a racing heart, or a seizure? Or sensed things that were not there?

Take action to find care. Be sure to find the right resource to help you get healthy.

National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service, available at 1-800-662-HELP. This service can provide you with information about treatment programs in your local community and allow you to speak with someone about alcohol support.

