

Clinical Corner – Recognizing Substance Abuse

Am I Drinking Too Much?

YES, if you are:

- A woman who has more than seven drinks* per week or more than three drinks per occasion
- A man who has more than 14 drinks* per week or more than four drinks per occasion
- Older than 65 years and have more than seven drinks* per week or more than three drinks per occasion

Am I Taking Risks with Alcohol or Other Mood-Altering Substances?

YES, if You:

- Drink or use drugs and drive or operate machinery, or if you mix alcohol or drugs with other medicine (over-the-counter and prescription drugs)
- Don't tell your surgeon, physician, or pharmacist that you are a regular drinker or user of mood-altering drugs
- Are pregnant or are trying to become pregnant and drink or use drugs. (Even small amounts of alcohol can hurt an unborn child. Other drugs are also dangerous in pregnancy)
- Drink alcohol or use drugs while you are looking after small children

Has My Drinking or Drug Use Become A Habit?

YES, If you drink or use drugs regularly to:

- Relax, relieve anxiety, or go to sleep
- Be more comfortable in social situations
- Avoid thinking about sad or unpleasant things
- Socialize with other regular drinkers or drug users

Is Alcohol or Drug Use Taking Over My Life?

YES, if you:

- Worry about having enough alcohol or drugs for an evening or weekend
- Hide alcohol or drugs, or buy alcohol at different stores so people will not know how much you are drinking
- Switch from one kind of drink to another, hoping that this will keep you from getting drunk
- Try to get "extra" drinks at a social event or sneak drinks when others aren't looking

Has Drinking Alcohol or Using Drugs Become a Problem for Me?

YES, if you:

- Can't stop drinking or using drugs once you start
- Have tried to stop drinking or using drugs for a week or so but only lasted a few days
- Fail to do what you should at work or at home because of drinking or drug use
- Feel guilty after drinking or using drugs
- Find that other people make comments to you about your drinking or drug use
- Have had a drink or used drugs in the morning to get yourself going
- Can't remember what happened while you were drinking or using drugs
- Have hurt someone as a result of your drinking or drug use

What Do I Do About Problem Drinking?

Try to cut down to safe drinking levels: less than seven drinks per week and less than three drinks per occasion for women and older people, and less than 14 drinks per week and less than four drinks per occasion for men.

How Can I Get Help for An Alcohol Or Drug Problem?

If you feel you need help to cut down, you can contact:

- Your doctor for advice, treatment, or referral
- Self-Help Support Groups:

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA); call your local chapter (check your local phone directory under "Alcoholism") www.alcoholics-anonymous.org

Narcotics Anonymous (NA); call your local chapter (check your local phone directory under "Drug Abuse" or call 818-773-9999) www.na.org

Al-Anon (for spouses and other significant adults in an alcoholic person's life) and Alateen (for children of alcoholics) Telephone: 1-800-344-2666 www.al-anon.alateen.org

Adult Children of Alcoholics Telephone: 1-310-534-1815 www.adultchildren.org

Women for Sobriety, Inc. Telephone: 1-800-333-1606 www.womenforsobriety.org

Center for Substance Abuse Treatment. Call 1-800-662-HELP for information about local treatment programs and to speak to someone about your alcohol or drug problem.

For More Information

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Public Information Office
Telephone: 1-301-443-3860
Website: www.niaaa.nih.gov

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
Telephone: 1-800-729-6686
Website: www.health.org

*--One drink = one 12-oz bottle of beer (4.5 percent alcohol), one 5-oz glass of wine (12.9 percent alcohol), or 1.5 oz of 80-proof distilled spirits.

Source:

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