



## Fact Sheets- Alcohol Use and Your Health

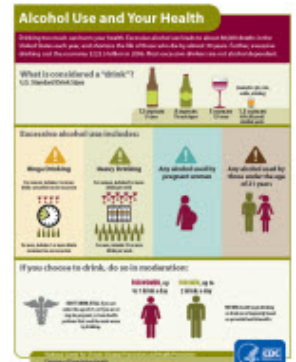
### Alcohol Use and Your Health


Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use led to approximately 88,000 deaths and 2.5 million years of potential life lost (YPLL) each year in the United States from 2006 – 2010, shortening the lives of those who died by an average of 30 years.<sup>1,2</sup> Further, excessive drinking was responsible for 1 in 10 deaths among working-age adults aged 20-64 years. The economic costs of excessive alcohol consumption in 2006 were estimated at \$223.5 billion, or \$1.90 a drink.<sup>3</sup>

#### What is a "drink"?

In the United States, a standard drink contains 0.6 ounces (14.0 grams or 1.2 tablespoons) 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 of 80-proof (40% alcohol content) distilled spirits or liquor (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey).<sup>4</sup>



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#### What is excessive drinking?

Excessive drinking includes binge drinking, heavy drinking, and any drinking by pregnant women or people younger than age 21.

- Binge drinking, the most common form of drinking, is defined as consuming
  - For women, 4 or more drinks during a single occasion.
  - For men, 5 or more drinks during a single occasion.
- Heavy drinking is defined as consuming
  - For women, 8 or more drinks per week.
  - For men, 15 or more drinks per week.

Most people who drink excessively are not alcoholics or alcohol dependent.<sup>5</sup>

#### What is moderate drinking?

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* defines moderate drinking as no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men.<sup>4</sup> However, there are some persons who should not drink any alcohol, including those who are:

- Pregnant or trying to become pregnant.
- Taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that may cause harmful reactions when mixed with alcohol.
- Younger than age 21.
- Recovering from alcoholism or are unable to control the amount they drink.
- Suffering from a medical condition that may be worsened by alcohol.
- Driving, planning to drive, or participating in other activities requiring skill, coordination, and alertness.

In addition, no one should start drinking or drink more based on potential health benefits.<sup>4</sup> By adhering to the *Dietary Guidelines*, you can reduce the risk of harm to yourself or others.

#### Short-Term Health Risks

Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of many harmful health conditions. These are most often the result of binge drinking and include the following:

- Injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, and burns.<sup>6,7</sup>
- Violence, including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.<sup>6-10</sup>
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency that results from high blood alcohol levels.<sup>11</sup>
- Risky sexual behaviors, including unprotected sex or sex with multiple partners. These behaviors can result in unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.<sup>12,13</sup>
- Miscarriage and stillbirth or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs) (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/index.html>) among pregnant women.<sup>6,12,14,15</sup>












## Long-Term Health Risks






Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems including:

- High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, and digestive problems.<sup>6,16-21</sup>
- Cancer of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon.<sup>6,22</sup>
- Learning and memory problems, including dementia and poor school performance.<sup>6</sup>
- Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.<sup>6,23</sup>
- Social problems, including lost productivity, family problems, and unemployment.<sup>6,24,25</sup>
- Alcohol dependence, or alcoholism.<sup>6</sup>

By not drinking too much, you can reduce the risk of these short- and long-term health risks.

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