

MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

A monthly newsletter from Atlantic Behavioral Health



Alcohol use in the United States has a long history, and at the time the U.S. came to its independence, the average American drank 5.8 gallons of alcohol per year. By 1830, that number rose to 7.1 gallons. Alcohol was considered healthy, safer than water, and sometimes even prescribed by doctors to treat depression and cancer. According to the World Health Organization, today in the U.S. the average American drinks 2.5 gallons per year. Alcohol is the most commonly used and readily available substance, and most Americans will drink alcohol at least once in their lifetime.

FAST FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL ABUSE

1. Approximately 95,000 Americans die from the effects of alcohol use every year. That's 261 people per day in the U.S. Worldwide, up to 3.3 million people each year die as a result of alcohol abuse.
2. 7% of drinking adults have DSM-V classified Alcohol Use Disorder.
3. Men are three times as likely as women to die from results of alcohol abuse; 71.4% of alcohol-related deaths are men.
4. Americans lose over 2.7 million years of potential life due to excessive drinking.
5. Each year, 97,000 sexual assaults among college students involve alcohol.
6. 58.1% of people killed in alcohol-related car crashes are between the ages of 20 and 34.

ALCOHOL ABUSE & THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The pandemic and 2020 quarantines had a significant impact on alcohol consumption.

- Liquor store sales increased 54% in the first three weeks of March 2020.
- During this same period, online liquor sales rose 262%.
- In April 2020, total alcohol sales were up 234%.
- 46% of people reported stress as the primary reason for increased drinking, 34% increased alcohol availability, 30% boredom.
- A one-year increase in alcohol consumption during the pandemic is estimated to cause 8,000 additional deaths from alcohol-related liver disease, 18,700 cases of liver failure, and 1,000 cases of liver cancer by 2040, according to a study at Massachusetts General Hospital.

National Center for Drug Abuse Statistics, 2022.

WHAT IS A STANDARD DRINK?

US Standard Drink Sizes



12 ounces
5% ABV beer



8 ounces
7% ABV malt liquor



5 ounces
12% ABV wine



1.5 ounces
40% (80 proof)
ABV distilled spirits
(gin, rum, vodka,
whiskey, etc.)

ABV = Alcohol by Volume

Binge drinking is defined as 4 or more drinks for women, and 5 or more drinks for men during a single occasion.

Moderate drinking is defined as 1 drink or less/day for women and 2 drinks or less/day for men.

Heavy drinking is defined as 8 or more drinks/week for women and 15 or more drinks/week for men.



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WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF DRINKING?

Chronic alcohol use affects the body's chemistry, including how it looks and functions. Some changes are reversible after quitting drinking, some stop progressing but don't reverse, and some can progress regardless of discontinuing alcohol use.

Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of harm. There are also many chronic conditions and illnesses that can occur as the result of long-term heavy drinking.



PHYSICAL & MENTAL BENEFITS OF NOT DRINKING ALCOHOL

- Better looking skin.** Abstinence from alcohol restores elasticity.
- Improved sleep.** Alcohol affects the sleep-wake cycle and makes it harder to fall and/or stay asleep.
- Healthier weight.** Alcohol derails metabolism and is filled with sugars and empty calories.
- Better mental health.** Abstaining from alcohol can allow more focal treatment for a co-occurring mental health disorder.
- Improved immunity.** Alcohol impedes white blood cell production, making it harder fight viruses and bacteria.
- Enhanced nutrition.** Alcohol interferes with digestion, storage, utilization, and excretion of nutrients and many heavy drinkers are malnourished.
- Lower risk of cancer.** Alcohol is a known carcinogen and increases risk of multiple types of cancer.

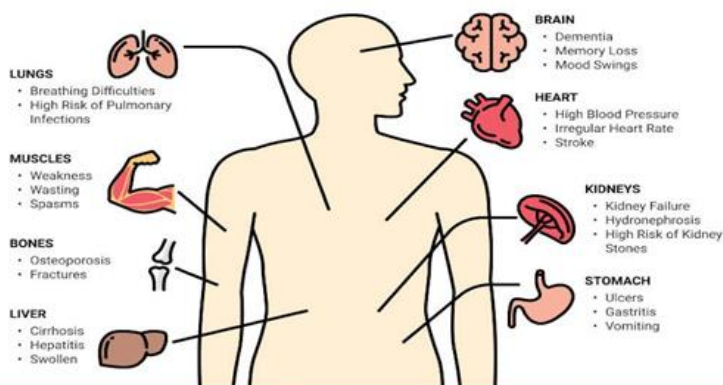
SHORT-TERM HEALTH RISKS

- Injuries such as car accidents, falls, drowning, and/or burns
- Violence including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, intimate partner violence
- Alcohol poisoning
- Risky sexual behaviors that can result in unintended pregnancy and/or STDs
- Miscarriage, stillbirth, or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders in pregnant women

LONG-TERM HEALTH RISKS

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- Digestive disorders
- Multiple types of cancer
- Weakened immune system
- Learning and memory issues including dementia
- Mental health issues such as depression and anxiety
- Social problems including family issues, job-related trouble, unemployment
- Alcohol use disorders, alcohol dependence

Physical Effects of Alcoholism



DUAL DIAGNOSIS: ALCOHOL ABUSE AND MENTAL ILLNESS

A dual diagnosis is when a mental health disorder and substance use disorder occur simultaneously. It is not uncommon for addiction to alcohol to also include a mental health diagnosis.

Roughly 1/3 of individuals struggling with alcohol abuse also suffer from mental illness.

Having a drinking problem or mental illness does not guarantee the development of a co-occurring disorder, but it does increase the likelihood of dual diagnosis later on. In the case of a dual diagnosis, both conditions feed off each other. Any amount of alcohol will affect the person's emotional well-being and the person's emotional well-being will affect the amount of alcohol they use to suppress symptoms.

Some common symptoms of dual diagnosis:

Isolating from family and friends

Change in appetite

Loss of energy and motivation

Trouble concentrating or completing tasks

Neglecting personal or professional responsibilities

Increased irritability, anger, or anxiety

Rationalizing excessive alcohol consumption

If you feel you or someone in your household may harm themselves or someone else:

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). The Online Lifeline Crisis Chat is free and confidential. You'll be connected to a skilled, trained counselor in your area.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224

If you are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety: **Disaster Distress Helpline** call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746

If you need to find treatment or behavioral health providers in your area: <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-treatment>

Mental Health Resources:

cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping

APA.org (American Psychological Association)

NAMI.org (National Alliance on Mental Illness)

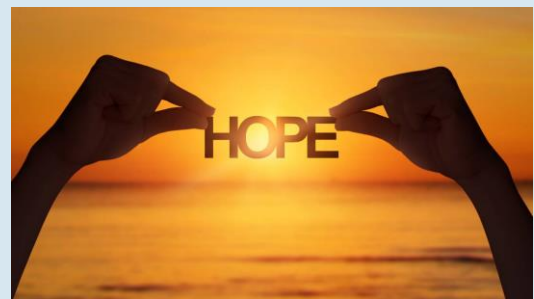
Self-help tips for a dual diagnosis:

1. **Manage stress and emotions.** Learn how to manage stress, cope with unpleasant feelings, and know your triggers and have an action plan.
2. **Connect with others.** Make face-to-face connection with friends and family a priority, listen to your doctor, and get therapy or become involved in a social support group.
3. **Make healthy lifestyle changes.** Exercise regularly, practice relaxation techniques, adopt healthy eating habits, get enough sleep.
4. **Find new meaning in life.** Develop new hobbies, activities, and interests, and avoid things that trigger your urge to drink.

REMEMBER: THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE!

According to The Recovery Research Institute, 9.1% or 22.35 million Americans have resolved an alcohol or other drug problem, 51% of which used alcohol as their primary substance.

Talk to your doctor if you think you have a problem with alcohol, mental health disorder, or dual diagnosis, or use the numbers below to get connected to help today!



Atlantic Behavioral Health ACCESS Center:

888-247-1400

Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention Services 24/7 Hotlines:

Chilton Medical Center: 973 – 831 – 5078
Hackettstown Medical Center 908 – 454 – 5141
Morristown Medical Center: 973 – 540 – 0100
Overlook Medical Center: 908 – 522 – 3586
Newton Medical Center: 973 – 383 – 0973



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