Do You Have a Drinking Problem?

Take the CAGE Test

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YES to 1 or 2 Questions = Possible Problem
YES to 3 or 4 Questions = Probable Dependence

How Much Is Too Much?

Most adults drink alcohol safely. For some, it’s a trap.

DIAL 311
For Non-Emergency NYC Services
Telephone Interpretation in 120 Languages
How Much Is Too Much?

- **For men:** More than 4 drinks on one occasion, or more than 14 a week.
- **For women and people 65 and older:** More than 3 drinks on one occasion, or more than 7 a week.

The Risks of Excessive Drinking

- Cirrhosis (scarring) of the liver
- Hepatitis
- Osteoporosis
- Hypertension
- Enlarged heart or weakening of the heart muscle
- Cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast, and colon
- Weakened immune system
- Pneumonia and other infections
- Accidents and injuries
- Committing or being the victim of violence
- Depression, dementia, and other mental disorders
- Suicide

Some People Shouldn’t Drink

**People shouldn’t drink at all when:**
- Driving or operating machinery
- Pregnant or trying to become pregnant
- Caring for children or others
- They have a personal history of alcohol or drug addiction
- Taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that interact with alcohol
- Under legal drinking age
- Children and adolescents who drink are at much higher risk for motor-vehicle crashes and alcohol-related brain damage
- The earlier people start drinking, the more likely they are to become addicted as adults

You should be extra cautious about drinking if you have:
- A family history of alcoholism or drug addiction
- Certain illnesses, such as diabetes, congestive heart failure, and long-term liver, stomach, or pancreas problems
- A history of depression
- A psychiatric illness

Alcoholism Is a Disease

- Alcoholism, or alcohol dependence, is a disease that usually gets worse unless it is treated. Symptoms include:
  - Craving – a strong urge to drink
  - Loss of control – being unable to stop drinking
  - Physical dependence – withdrawal symptoms (nausea, sweating, shakiness, anxiety)
  - Increased tolerance – the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to feel its effects
  - Blackouts – forgetting what happens when drinking

You don’t have to be an alcoholic to have a problem.

- A drinking problem is any level of drinking that harms the drinker, jeopardizes the drinker’s well-being, or places others at risk.
- Even moderate drinking can sometimes be a problem
- Taking any amount of alcohol with some medications can be dangerous
- Even one drink a day can accelerate liver damage in people with hepatitis

Problem Drinking Is Treatable

- Looking honestly at your own drinking can be difficult. This is called “denial” and is part of the problem.
- Many treatment options are available. For help and information:
  - Talk to your doctor or a substance abuse counselor.
  - Call 1-800-LifeNet (see More Information).
  - Call Alcoholics Anonymous or go to a meeting.

If someone you care about has a problem:

- Encourage the person to get help.
- Take care of yourself – consider a support group such as Al-Anon or Alateen.

Don’t give up!

People can and do get better, every day.
Recovery is possible.

More Information and Help

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For copies of any Health Bulletin

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• Hepatitis.

• Osteoporosis.

• Hypertension.

• Enlarged heart or weakening of the heart muscle.

• Cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, breast, and colon.

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What is 1 drink?

A 12-oz. glass, bottle, or can of beer or ale
A 5-oz. glass of wine, or a 3.5-oz. glass of fortified wine
A 1.5-oz. “shot” of distilled liquor or brandy (straight or in a mixed drink)

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Prepared in cooperation with:
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