

SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL USE

Prolonged or chronic use of alcohol may result in:

- Strained relationships within the family
- Financial strain
- Loss of job
- Homelessness
- Intimate partner violence

To help you decide whether you might have a problem with your own drinking, you can ask yourself these 4 questions.

1. Have you ever felt that you needed to cut down on your drinking? Yes/No
2. Have others ever annoyed you by commenting on your drinking? Yes/No
3. Have you ever felt guilty about drinking? Yes/No
4. Have you ever felt you needed a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover? Yes/No

If you answered "yes" for 2 or more, you may be sensitive to a diagnosis of alcohol use disorder (excessive drinking/alcoholism) and further screening is recommended from a health professional.

National Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Programme (NADAPP)

Ministry of Health
4 - 6 Queen's Park East,
Port of Spain,

Phone: (868) 217-4664 Ext. 12609 -12611
and 12615 -12618

Email: NADAPPprogrammes@health.gov.tt



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ALCOHOL USE



ALCOHOL

Alcohol, or ethanol, is a psychoactive substance found in beverages like beer, wine, and spirits. It depresses the central nervous system and excessive use can cause addiction or dependence.

Alcohol use disorder (AUD) is a medical condition characterised by an impaired ability to stop or control alcohol use despite adverse social, occupational, or health consequences. It encompasses the conditions that are sometimes referred to as alcohol dependence, alcohol addiction and the colloquial term, alcoholism.

When alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream, it dissolves in the water of the blood and is transported throughout the body. It then enters parts of the body, such as the brain, kidney, lungs and liver, where it exerts its effects.

By knowing the percentage of alcohol in drinks, persons can avoid the health and social impact of excessive drinking.



WHAT IS EXCESSIVE DRINKING?

4 or more drinks per day for women
5 or more drinks per day for men

Risks associated with excessive drinking include:

- Short-term harms e.g. injuries
- Long-term chronic health problems

PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Use of Alcohol may cause:

- Impaired thought processing, judgment and decision making
- Reduced inhibitions – persons may become talkative, false self-confidence
- Increased sexual behavior; decreased sexual performance
- Heightened emotions
- Anxiety and/or depression
- Domestic violence
- Worsened mental illness

HEALTH RISKS

Use of Alcohol may cause:

- Fluctuation in blood pressure (increase or decrease)
- Reduced processing of the 5 senses and raised threshold for pain
- Impaired voluntary muscle movements – jerky, uncoordinated muscle movements, loss of balance
- Irritated lining of the stomach and intestine leading to vomiting, bleeding and ulcers
- Increased blood flow to the skin resulting in skin being flushed. The body heat is lost and the body temperature drops
- Reduced blood flow to the muscles which can lead to muscle aches, especially during “hangovers.”
- Increased liver activity, which causes cell death and hardening of the tissue (Cirrhosis of the liver)
- In females: possible infertility, miscarriages, still-births and fetal alcohol syndrome
- In males: possible low sperm count, damaged sperm, shrinking testicles, impotence