

Alcohol is a depressant that changes how a person thinks, acts, and feels. Although alcohol may cause temporary feelings of elation (a stimulation effect), it slows down (or depresses) parts of the brain, including the areas of the brain that control breathing and heart rate.

What constitutes an alcohol problem?

An alcohol problem is any condition caused by drinking that harms the drinker directly or places others at risk.

What is the difference between different types of alcohol problems?

The term alcoholism usually refers to alcohol abuse or dependence. Alcohol problems do not necessarily involve dependence, but abuse can lead to dependence and a variety of other problems. The most common alcohol problems include:

Binge Drinking

Binge drinking is consuming a large amount of alcohol in a short amount of time. For males, binge drinking is five or more drinks within two hours; for females, it is four or more drinks in under two hours.

Alcohol Abuse

Alcohol abuse can result in absence from or poor performance at school or work, legal difficulties, and poor judgment that leads to dangerous situations, such as drinking and driving. When individuals who abuse alcohol continue to drink, even though it causes them social, interpersonal, or legal problems, it is most often an indicator of alcohol dependence.

Alcohol Dependence

Alcohol dependence, or alcoholism, is a chronic and often progressive disease that includes a strong need to drink despite repeated social or interpersonal problems, such as losing a job or deteriorating relationships. Alcohol dependence usually consists of at least several symptoms, including repeated unsuccessful attempts to stop or cut down, a need for increased amounts of alcohol (tolerance), or symptoms of withdrawal (physical dependence).



Who develops alcohol problems?

Nearly 17.6 million people in the United States – 1 in every 12 adults – suffer from alcohol abuse or dependence. Although genetics can play a large role in who develops an alcohol problem, environmental factors, such as stress or trauma, may also increase an individual's risk of developing a problem.

What is alcohol poisoning?

Alcohol depresses the nerves that control breathing and the gag reflex, which prevents choking. A person who drinks a fatal dose of alcohol will eventually stop breathing. Even if an individual survives an alcohol overdose, irreversible brain damage may occur. Once a person has passed out, the blood alcohol concentration can continue to rise.

Can eating or drinking coffee help someone sober up more quickly?

Drinking coffee, taking a cold bath or shower, and sleeping or walking it off are all myths. The only thing that reverses the effects of alcohol is time. The human body breaks down only one drink per hour. When more than one drink per hour is consumed, the excess alcohol travels to all parts of the body, circulating until the liver is finally able to process it. While the excess alcohol is circulating, damage is occurring throughout – especially to the brain.

For help or information, call NCADA at 314.962.3456 or visit ncada-stl.org

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