

Substance Abuse

Alcohol or drug abuse is a harmful pattern of substance use resulting in significant interference in major role obligations, or repeated substance use in situations that are physically hazardous, or substance use resulting in repeated legal problems, or continued use despite persistent social or interpersonal problems.

How do I know if I have a problem?

- Do you repeatedly drink more than you intend or want to?
- Do you get into trouble when you use alcohol or drugs?
- Do you have memory lapses when you drink?
- Have you missed work, school or social obligations due to drinking?
- Have you ever felt the need to cut back on your drinking?
- Have you ever gotten angry with friends or relatives who express concern about your substance use?
- Have you ever felt guilty over your use of alcohol or drugs?
- Have you ever had an “eye opener” first thing in the morning?

Health issues for women who abuse alcohol

Many of alcohol’s negative effects are common to both men and women. In some cases, there are alcohol-related problems specific to women that put them at greater risk.

Menstrual Cycle Some women are more affected by alcohol while ovulating or when they are premenstrual. This is because, at these times, it takes longer for alcohol to be metabolized and blood alcohol concentration is thus higher and more prolonged.

Fertility Heavy drinking is known to be a cause of female infertility, but a recent American study found that even moderate drinking may contribute to the risk of specific types of infertility.

Liver Compared with men, women appear to be more prone to liver damage from alcohol after a comparatively shorter period of heavy drinking and at a lower level of drinks per day.

Breast Cancer Moderate and heavy alcohol consumption may be related to breast cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends a limit of one drink per day for those women who drink alcoholic beverages.

Victimization The British Crime Survey found that in 44 percent of violent crimes, the victim reported the assailant as being “drunk.” In addition, high proportions of victims of violence, including sexual assaults, are themselves under the influence of alcohol at the time of the offense.

What you can do if you are worried about your drinking and drug use:

- Consult with your physician or other health care provider.
- Talk with your minister, priest or rabbi.
- Look in the yellow pages of the telephone directory under “Alcoholism Treatment,” “Substance Abuse” or “Social Service Organizations.”
- Call a support group such as Alcoholics Anonymous or Women Reaching Women (listed in the business white pages or the yellow pages of the telephone directory).



For more information:

SAMHSA’s Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, (800) 662-HELP, findtreatment.samhsa.gov
Wisconsin Help Hotline, (866) 211-3380, dhfs.wisconsin.gov/substabus