

# Alcohol Use and Your Health

Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use leads to about 88,000 deaths in the United States each year, and shortens the life of those who die by almost 30 years. Further, excessive drinking cost the economy \$249 billion in 2010. Most excessive drinkers are not alcohol dependent.

## What is considered a “drink”?

U.S. Standard Drink Sizes



12 ounces  
5% beer



8 ounces  
7% malt liquor



5 ounces  
12% wine

(examples: gin, rum,  
vodka, whiskey)



1.5 ounces  
40% (80 proof)  
distilled spirits

## Excessive alcohol use includes:



### Binge Drinking

For women, 4 or more drinks  
consumed on one occasion



For men, 5 or more drinks  
consumed on one occasion



### Heavy Drinking

For women, 8 or more drinks  
per week



For men, 15 or more drinks  
per week



### Any alcohol used by pregnant women



### Any alcohol used by those under the age of 21 years



## If you choose to drink, do so in moderation:



**DON'T DRINK AT ALL** if you are  
under the age of 21, or if you are or  
may be pregnant, or have health  
problems that could be made worse  
by drinking.

**FOR WOMEN**, up  
to 1 drink a day



**FOR MEN**, up to  
2 drinks a day



**NO ONE** should begin drinking  
or drink more frequently based  
on potential health benefits.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion  
Division of Population Health



Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of many harmful health conditions. These are most often the result of binge drinking. Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems.

## Short-Term Health Risks

### Injuries

- Motor vehicle crashes
- Falls
- Drownings
- Burns

### Violence

- Homicide
- Suicide
- Sexual assault
- Intimate partner violence

### Alcohol poisoning

#### Reproductive health

- Risky sexual behaviors
- Unintended pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)



## Long-Term Health Risks

### Chronic diseases

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- Digestive problems

### Cancers

- Breast
- Mouth and throat
- Liver
- Colon

### Learning and memory problems

- Dementia
- Poor school performance

### Mental health

- Depression
- Anxiety

### Social problems

- Lost productivity
- Family problems
- Unemployment

### Alcohol dependence

