

### Facts About Alcohol

#### Is alcohol a drug?

Yes. It is a drug that has an effect on your body and your mind. It changes the way you feel, just like any drug.

#### What are the effects of drinking alcohol?

Alcohol calms most people down. But in some people even a small amount can make it hard for them to control themselves. They may get loud and mad. As a general rule, the more alcohol a person drinks, the more harmful it is to the mind and body. Alcohol can make it hard to see, remember, and work. It may make it hard to make good decisions about things like dealing with children or driving. Drinking a large amount of alcohol at one time can cause a person to pass out. They may even have trouble breathing, and even die. Heavy drinking for many years can damage the heart, liver and brain and also cause death. It can also cause people to lose control over how much and when they drink.

#### What is "Social" drinking?

Moderate or "social" drinking is defined as no more than one drink a day for most women, and no more than two drinks a day for most men. A standard drink is generally considered to be 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled "spirits". Each drink contains about the same amount of alcohol- approximately 0.5 ounce or 12 grams.

#### Is social drinking harmful?

Even moderate drinking is not risk-free\*. Pregnant women, people who drive a car or who need to pay attention to something, people taking medications, people under 21, and people who are recovering from an addiction, are some of the people who should not drink at all. Ask your doctor. Stroke and cancer have also been found to be connected to even low levels of drinking in some people. Also, some people will go from low levels of drinking to higher levels and become addicted to alcohol. Almost 50% of car deaths have something to do with alcohol.

#### Is alcohol addictive?

Yes. Loss of control over drinking can happen when too much alcohol is used for long periods. After a while, a person may need alcohol in order to feel "normal." Often more and more alcohol is needed to feel "high" or normal.

#### What is alcoholism?

Alcoholism is a disease that affects all ages. In general, people are said to have a problem with alcohol or be alcoholic when they can't control their drinking and when their drinking has a bad impact on their physical or mental health, families, friends, jobs and money.

### Can alcohol cause death?

Yes. Long-term, heavy drinking can cause fatal illnesses. These include heart and liver disease. Death can also result from alcohol-related injuries or an alcohol/drug overdose. Some people stop breathing if they drink too much alcohol at once.

\*National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism No. 16 PH 315 April 1992