

FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOLISM

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is a disease that includes the following four symptoms:

- **Craving** – a strong need, or urge, to drink.
- **Loss of control** – not being able to stop drinking once drinking has begun.
- **Physical dependence** – Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after stopping drinking.
- **Tolerance** – The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get “high.”

What Does Someone With Alcoholism Look Like?

There is no “common” look. You may be old or young; male or female; single, married, divorced, widowed or living with someone; practice any religion or none; live in the country, city, or suburb; earn a lot or a little; come from any ethnic, cultural, or racial background; have any level of education; and live any type of lifestyle.

Are Specific Groups of People More Likely To Have Problems?

Alcohol abuse and alcoholism cut across gender, race, and nationality. Nearly 14 million people in the United States--1 in every 13 adults--abuse alcohol or are alcoholic. And alcohol problems are highest among young adults ages 18-29 and lowest among adults ages 65 and older. It has been proven that people who start drinking at an early age, 14 or younger, have an increased chance that they will develop alcohol problems at some point in their lives.

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Remember Recovery is a Journey – Help yourself or a Loved One Stay Sober. Just a Few of the Many Benefits are:

- » Regaining the freedom to make choices
- » Improving relationships
- » Rediscovering peace of mind - or discovering it for the first time
- » Better lifestyle



Is Alcoholism A Disease?

Yes, alcoholism is a disease. The craving that an alcoholic feels for alcohol can be as strong as the need for food or water. An alcoholic will continue to drink despite serious family, health, or legal problems. Like many other diseases, alcoholism is chronic, meaning that it lasts a person's lifetime; it usually follows a predictable course; and it has symptoms. The risk for developing alcoholism is influenced both by a person's genes and by his or her lifestyle.

Is Alcoholism Inherited?

Research shows that the risk for developing alcoholism does indeed run in families.

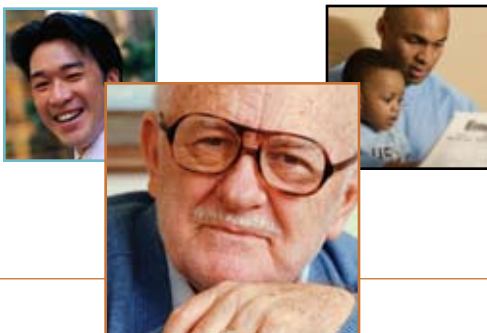
However, your friends, the amount of stress in your life, and how readily available alcohol is also are factors that may increase your risk for alcoholism. But Risk is not destiny. Just because alcoholism tends to run in families doesn't mean that a child of an alcoholic parent will automatically become an alcoholic too. Some people develop alcoholism even though no one in their family has a drinking problem and not all children of alcoholic families get into trouble with alcohol. Knowing you are at risk is important because then you can take steps to protect yourself from developing problems with alcohol.

Can Alcoholism Be Cured?

No, alcoholism cannot be cured at this time. Even if an alcoholic hasn't been drinking for a long time, he or she can still suffer a relapse. To guard against a relapse, an alcoholic must continue to avoid all alcoholic beverages.

Can Alcoholism Be Treated?

Yes, alcoholism can be treated. Alcoholism treatment programs use both counseling and medications to help a person stop drinking. Most alcoholics need help to recover from their disease. With support and treatment, many people are able to stop drinking and rebuild their lives.



Alcoholism treatment works for many people. But just like any chronic disease, there are varying levels of success when it comes to treatment. Some people stop drinking and remain sober. Others have long periods of sobriety with bouts of relapse. And still others cannot stop drinking for any length of time. With treatment, one thing is clear, however: the longer a person abstains from alcohol, the more likely they will be able to stay sober. Asking for help is a sign of strength!

Do you have to be an alcoholic to experience problems?

No. Alcoholism is only one type of an alcohol problem. Alcohol abuse can be just as harmful. A person can abuse alcohol without actually being an alcoholic drinking too much and too often can be just as dangerous. Some of the problems linked to alcohol abuse include not being able to meet work, school, or family responsibilities; drunk-driving arrests and car crashes; and drinking-related medical conditions.

What can you do if you think you have problem?

Remember you are not a bad person! Alcohol makes you feel depressed. It lowers self-esteem. This results in self-destructive or worthless feelings. When you do things because of these feelings, it makes you feel even worse about yourself. Overall, dependence adds to the risk of personal tragedy, both socially and physically.

Some helpful resources for alcoholism are:

- » Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) www.SAMHSA.gov
Crisis - 1-800-273-8255
- » Alcoholics Anonymous www.Alcoholics-anonymous.org
Web site contains educational information and telephone numbers for assistance in areas throughout the US.
- » Al-Anon is a support for families and friends.
www.al-anon.org