

## **ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH**

Know the facts about alcohol use and abuse

The 2021 National Survey on Drug Use and Health published by the [National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism \(NIAAA\)](#) reports that youth between the ages of 12-17 years use alcohol more than cannabis or tobacco. Although alcohol use among youth is lower than adult consumption rates, approximately 3.2 million youth surveyed admitted to binge drinking at least one time in the last month of the reporting period. Click [here](#) for more on this report from the NIAAA.

Those who overconsume alcohol can experience negative health effects and consequences. Injuries from falls and vehicle accidents are common results of alcohol use and abuse. Individuals may underestimate the time it takes for alcohol's effects to occur. This can lead to greater alcohol consumption and prolonged adverse symptoms.

In addition to the health effects related to consuming alcohol the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that each day in the U.S. 32 people die related to alcohol-impaired vehicle drivers. Click [here](#) for more from the CDC.

### **ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION AND EFFECTS**

Alcohol use and abuse can cause central nervous system (CNS) depression, respiratory depression, and cardiovascular symptoms. Signs and symptoms can include low heart rate, lower rate of breathing, confusion, memory loss, nausea and vomiting, clammy or cold skin, mood swings, and slow reflexes. These symptoms may progress and become life threatening. Call 911 immediately for anyone showing signs of CNS depression.

The intensity of these effects is directly related to the amount of alcohol consumed. The amount of alcohol in an alcoholic beverage is not determined by the amount of liquid. The alcohol content is measured by percentages. For instance:

- A 12-ounce beer may contain 5% alcohol
- A 5-ounce glass of wine may contain 12% alcohol.
- A 1.5-ounce shot of 80-proof liquor contains 40% alcohol.

Mixing alcohol with other beverages does not decrease the amount of alcohol consumed. It may decrease the discomfort associated with consuming alcoholic beverages with higher alcohol content and the time taken to consume the beverage. This can be deceiving and lead to lapses in judgment resulting in greater alcohol consumption. To learn about the alcohol content of standard drinks, click [here](#) for more from the NIAAA.

People who should not consume alcohol include:

- Any person younger than 21 years of age
- Pregnant women
- Anyone who plans to operate a vehicle
- Anyone who is in recovery from alcohol use disorder
- Anyone who has been told to abstain from alcohol for medical reasons, including the use of certain medications

- Anyone taking prescription or over-the-counter medications should check with their health care provider before consuming alcoholic beverages.

Small children who consume alcoholic beverages are at a much greater risk for poisoning. A 2-year-old child who unintentionally consumes alcohol can experience significant CNS depression and low blood sugar. Children may also experience respiratory depression, seizures, coma, and even death following alcohol consumption.

Underage consumption of alcohol results in more than 189,000 emergency room visits and 3,500 deaths each year in the United States. Teens and young adults under 21 years of age are more likely to binge drink or consume four or more alcoholic beverages in a short period of time. Binge drinking is directly related to the high rate of alcohol poisoning among youth who consume alcohol. Alcohol use in this demographic is associated with cognitive impairment, academic difficulties, and increased risk of alcohol use disorder in youth and into adulthood.

### **ALCOHOL POISONING**

Alcohol poisoning is the immediate result of excessive alcohol consumption over a short period of time. It is estimated that six people die each day from alcohol poisoning in the United States. Excessive consumption decreases brain function and can impact critical functions like breathing, heart rate, and body temperature control. Other signs of alcohol poisoning can include vomiting, seizures, and coma. If anyone experiences these symptoms call 911 immediately for emergency medical services and care at the closest hospital emergency department.

### **ALCOHOL DEPENDENCE – LONG-TERM RISKS**

Alcohol use disorder (AUD) can lead to the development of chronic and irreversible health problems. People with AUD have developed the following serious health issues:

- High blood pressure
- Heart disease and stroke
- Liver disease and digestive problems
- Cancer
- Immune deficiency
- Cognitive impairment
- Dementia
- Mental health and social problems

If you drink alcohol, please be responsible and know your limit. Please do not drink and drive. For questions and for more information about the effects of alcohol, call the Michigan Poison & Drug Information Center day or night.

**1-800-222-1222**