



Alcoholism

Alcoholism or alcohol dependence syndrome is a disease that is characterized by a strong need or craving to drink, the inability to stop drinking, physical dependence on alcohol and tolerance.

Symptoms

- Craving – a strong need or compulsion to drink
- Loss of control – the frequent inability to stop drinking once a person has begun
- Physical dependence – the occurrence of withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness and anxiety, when alcohol use is stopped after a period of heavy drinking
- Tolerance – the need for increased amounts of alcohol in order to feel its effects

Statistics

- Nearly 14 million Americans abuse alcohol or are alcoholic
- Approximately 53 percent of men and women in the United States report having a close relative with a drinking problem
- In economic terms, alcohol abuse problems cost approximately \$100 billion each year

Effects

- Increased risk for developing cancers including liver, esophagus, throat and larynx
- Increased risk for developing liver cirrhosis, immune system problems and brain damage
- Increased risk for death from alcohol-related accidents including automobile crashes, recreational accidents, on-the-job accidents and the likelihood of suicide

Tips

- The following four questions may help you to determine if you or a loved one has a problem with alcohol.
 - Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking?

- Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- Have you ever felt bad or guilty about drinking?
- Have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?
- One “yes” response suggests a problem with alcohol; More than one “yes” response indicates a high risk that a problem exists.
- Getting Help
 - Seeking help for your alcohol problem is the smart choice; alcoholism is a treatable disease, but without the proper help it can take over your life.
 - Treatments can include detoxification, doctor-prescribed medications, individual and/or group counseling.
 - Relapses are common and are not a sign of failure.

ADAMH is your community safety net. If you or someone you love needs help call 276-CARE, the front door to the ADAMH system of care.