

# About Alcohol And Other Drugs

## About Alcohol

[Why Do People Drink?](#)

[How Do I Know If I Have A Drinking Problem?](#)

[What Effects Can Alcohol Have On Me?](#)

[How Can I Get Help?](#)

## About Other Drugs

[What Is A Drug?](#)

[Why Do People Use Drugs?](#)

[What Effects Can Drugs Have On Me?](#)

[How Can I Get Help?](#)

## Avoiding Alcohol and Other Drug Problems

---

### **Why Do People Drink?**

Students give many different reasons why they may drink. Some students say they drink because of peer pressure and to be part of a crowd. Some use alcohol to avoid difficult situations that may arise at school and work and with family and friends. Others use alcohol to avoid uncomfortable feelings, like anxiety or sadness. Anyone who drinks runs the risk of developing an alcohol problem. A serious problem can develop quickly, especially among college students.

### **How Do I Know If I Have A Drinking Problem?**

Below is a set of questions designed to help you find out if alcohol use may be a problem:

- Do you prefer to drink alone rather than with others?
- Does your drinking cause problems with school (e.g., falling grades) or at work (e.g. being late)?
- Do you drink to escape your problems?
- When you drink, do you get very emotional?
- Do you ever have memory loss or blackouts due to drinking?
- When you drink, do you often get drunk even when you did not mean to drink to excess?
- Do you find that you have to drink more and more to get the same effect?
- Do you get into trouble with the law or injure yourself when you drink?

If you answered "yes" to one or more of these questions, you may have a drinking problem. If you have a drinking problem, or suspect that you have one, there are many others out there like you. As a matter of fact, more than 10 million people suffer from alcoholism.

## **What Effects Can Alcohol Have On Me?**

Immediate physical effects from alcohol include: loss of muscle control, impaired reflexes, vomiting, and unconsciousness. Because alcohol goes directly into the bloodstream, overuse of alcohol can affect almost every system in the body. Long term use can cause cancer, brain damage, cirrhosis of the liver, weight gain, and birth defects if drinking while pregnant. Excessive drinking can also cause serious accidents, injuries, and death. For example, more than one out of every three motor vehicle fatalities involves alcohol and one out of every four drownings are alcohol-related.

Alcohol can have psychological effects as well. It can affect your school work and family and social relationships. Studies have shown that students who drink alcohol to excess end up with poorer school grades and take longer time to complete their degrees. Because alcohol lowers inhibitions and impairs judgment, risky and violent behavior can result. For example, students impaired by alcohol often engage in vandalism and physical fights. Friendships and romantic relationships can also be jeopardized. Alcohol can lead people to say or do things they might regret, like making a bad decision about having sex with someone. Alcohol abuse can also lead to family conflicts and broken households.

One does not have to be using alcohol to be damaged by its effects. Children and partners of alcoholics can be seriously affected too. Family members and other loved ones often suffer from psychological symptoms, including low self-esteem, depression, health problems, and relationship problems, like difficulties getting close to others. They may also find themselves minimizing the severity of their loved one's problem, feeling responsible for the problem, or feeling a lot of anger, shame, and resentment.

In addition, family and friends of alcoholics may display their own addictive behaviors. Being related to an alcoholic or living with an alcoholic puts one at greater risk for alcoholism and other addictions, including gambling and overeating. Finally, family and friends who are close to an alcoholic often take on their responsibilities, attempting to function for them in ways that are often unhealthy. This is commonly known as "codependency" and includes feelings of having lost control over one's own emotions and behavior.

## **How Can I Get Help?**

Help is available and easy to find! There are many different types of treatments to help those whose lives are affected by alcohol. For severe alcohol addictions, there are detoxification programs that require the alcoholic to stay in a hospital or a treatment center. There are also programs that treat the problem at a clinic that the patient can attend daily. Once the physical addiction is addressed, follow-up treatment is always recommended.

Treatments for detoxified patients and those with less severe problems include individual, family, or couple's therapy. Support groups are also available for sufferers of alcoholism and their family members or loved ones. You can contact the Counseling Center on your campus to get more information about alcohol treatment or you can call:

Alcoholics Anonymous - (212) 870-3400 or (914) 949-1200 or [www.alcoholics-anonymous.org](http://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org)

Al-Anon/Alateen - (212) 941-0094 or (914) 946-1748 or (800)939-2770 (Spanish speakers) or (800)344-2466 (AI-

Anon worldwide) or [www.al-anon.alateen.org](http://www.al-anon.alateen.org)

Adult Children of Alcoholic Groups - (914) 949-1200 or [www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)

Self Help Clearinghouse - (914) 949-6761(x319) or (212) 586-5770

The National Drug and Alcohol Abuse Referral Hotline - (800) 821-4357

CHOICES Clinic - (914)763-8151, outpatient treatment for alcohol and drug problems, 800 Cross River Road, Katonah, New York

Phelps Threshold - (914) 631-3133, outpatient treatment for alcohol and drug problems, 38 Beekman Avenue, North Tarrytown, New York

St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center - (800)784-8804, treatment for alcohol and drug problems, 275 North Street, Harrison, New York

---

### **What Is A Drug?**

A drug is any substance that changes how the body works once it gets inside the body. Some examples of drugs are nicotine, cocaine, steroids, marijuana, inhalants, and caffeine. Different drugs have different effects on the body. Some drugs can cause you to hallucinate (i.e., see or hear things that other people do not). Others may speed up or slow down your system.

### **Why Do People Use Drugs?**

People may use drugs for a number of reasons. Some take them out of curiosity to see what they feel like or because their friends are using them. Others take them to escape painful feelings and situations. Some use drugs because they are addicted and they cannot stop; the drug becomes more important than family, friends, or school. Still others use drugs because they believe in myths - that a drug can make someone more confident, get more work done, feel less sad, improve their sex life, and have more fun. The biggest myth is that occasional drug use is harmless.

### **What Effects Can Drugs Have On Me?**

Depending on the frequency and type of use, drugs can have severe and long-lasting effects on the body. Some drugs will cause damage after just one use, while others will hurt the body and mind more slowly. Here are some examples of possible effects different drugs can have:

Nicotine - diminished sense of smell and taste, smoker's cough, emphysema, heart disease, stroke, cancer,

frequent colds, and chronic bronchitis.

Cocaine and Crack - heart attacks, strokes, respiratory failure, seizures, and reduction of the body's ability to resist infection.

Steroids - liver tumors, high blood pressure, hair loss, severe acne, testicular shrinking, stunted growth, and an irregular menstrual cycle.

Marijuana - sleeplessness, reduced concentration, paranoia, hallucinations, intense anxiety, cancer, and increased risk of infertility.

Inhalants - severe mood swings, suffocation, loss of sense of smell, nosebleeds, liver, lung and kidney impairment, and brain damage.

Caffeine - sleeplessness, reduced concentration, intense anxiety, and restlessness.

One can become dependent on any drug, including those listed above.

### **How Can I Get Help?**

Depending on the type of drug use, there are many different types of treatments available. For severe drug problems, there are detoxification and medication programs that require the patient to stay either in a hospital or treatment center. Also, there are programs that are administered at a clinic that the patient can attend daily.

Treatments for less severe problems include individual, family, or couple's therapy. Also, there are many support groups available for drug users and their family members or loved ones. You can contact the Counseling Center (link to counseling center addresses and phone numbers and link to guide to counseling experience) on your campus to get more information about drug treatment or you can call:

National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Service - (800) 662-HELP

The National Drug and Alcohol Abuse Referral - (800) 821-4357

Narcotics Anonymous - (212) 929-6262 or [www.na.org](http://www.na.org)

Cocaine Anonymous - (212) 929-7302 or [www.ca.org](http://www.ca.org)

National Cancer Institute, Cancer Information Service, Johns Hopkins Oncology Center - (800) 4-CANCER

CHOICES Clinic - (914)763-8151, outpatient treatment for alcohol and drug problems, 800 Cross River Road, Katonah, New York

Phelps Threshold - (914) 631-3133, outpatient treatment for alcohol and drug problems, 38 Beekman Avenue, North Tarrytown, New York)

St. Vincent's Hospital and Medical Center - (800)784-8804, treatment for alcohol and drug problems, 275 North Street, Harrison, New York

### **Avoiding Alcohol And Drug Problems**

- Drug and alcohol use and abuse is preventable.
- Get educated. Know the facts. Once you do, you will realize that it is not worth endangering your career, your health, your relationships, and your future.
- Avoid peer pressure. Think ahead about how to say "no."
- Avoid situations where people will be drinking and using drugs. Get involved in non-drinking activities.
- Confront your problem if you have one.
- Get help for the underlying problems of family, relationships, anxiety or depression.
- Educate others.

**800-874-PACE**  
**New York City**  
**Westchester**

Last updated 09/01/2006