



BalanceHealthSM Newsletter

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Alcohol Awareness

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) has sponsored Alcohol Awareness month each April since 1987.

Alcohol education is extremely important as it effects a large number of individuals and families each year. The NIH reports that in 2013, 24.6% of people over 18 reported binge drinking within the past month. In addition, nearly 88,000 people die from alcohol related causes annually, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in the United States.

As we know, adults over the age of 21 are free to enjoy beverages that contain alcohol as they please and for most healthy adults, having a drink is not a problem. In fact, moderate drinking, which is defined as up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men, may have beneficial effects on health including decreased risk for heart disease, stroke, and diabetes.

The problem is that people can become dependent on alcohol, relying on alcohol to feel “normal” or even to

get through the day. This can progress to alcoholism, which is a very serious condition. According to the Mayo Clinic, alcoholism is a chronic and often progressive disease that includes problems controlling your drinking, being preoccupied with alcohol, continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems, having to drink more to get the same effect (physical dependence), or having withdrawal symptoms when you rapidly decrease or stop drinking.

If you suspect you or someone you love is an alcoholic it is important to seek professional help from a doctor and mental health professional as people can become physically dependent on alcohol, making it potentially dangerous to stop drinking “cold turkey” on your own.

The majority of adults who consume alcohol do not become alcoholics. However, as the NIH points out, almost a quarter of the population has reported “binge drinking” at least once per month. Therefore, even if you are not an alcoholic it is still important to understand the health risks associated with heavy drinking.

For more information or advice about alcohol, contact your Wellness Coordinator by calling:

1.800.327.2255

eni's **BalanceHealth** program is a confidential service provided by your employer to help you achieve and maintain a healthy lifestyle.





Heavy drinking over time or drinking too much at one time can have many negative effects on your health.

Brain

Obviously drinking alcohol affects your brain, but what is actually going on to give you that “drunk” feeling? Alcohol interferes with the brain’s communication pathways. These disruptions can change mood and behavior and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination.

Liver

Heavy drinking over time seriously impacts your liver and can lead to inflammation and serious conditions including:

- Steatosis, or fatty liver
- Alcoholic hepatitis
- Fibrosis
- Cirrhosis

Pancreas:

Alcohol causes the pancreas to produce toxic substances. Over time, this can lead to lead to pancreatitis, which prevents proper digestion.

Heart:

Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including:

- Cardiomyopathy – Stretching and drooping of heart muscle

- Arrhythmias – Irregular heart beat
- Stroke
- High blood pressure

Immune System:

Drinking too much weakens the immune system. Your immune system is weaker up to 24 hours after getting drunk making it more difficult for your body to ward off infection at this time. In addition, chronic heavy drinkers are more likely to contract diseases like pneumonia and tuberculosis than people who do not drink too much.

Cancer:

Heavy drinking over a long period of time may increase your risk of developing certain cancers, including cancers of the:

- Mouth
- Esophagus
- Throat
- Liver
- Breast

Moderate consumption of alcohol can be part of a healthy lifestyle, just be sure to drink responsibly. And remember if you feel that you may have a problem with alcohol it is important to seek professional help.

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