Alcohol Use and Your Health

Drinking too much can harm your health. Excessive alcohol use leads to about 88,000 deaths in the United States each year, and shortens the life of those who die by almost 30 years. Further, excessive drinking cost the economy $223.5 billion in 2006. Most excessive drinkers are not alcohol dependent.

What is considered a “drink”? U.S. Standard Drink Sizes

- 12 ounces 5% beer
- 8 ounces 7% malt liquor
- 5 ounces 12% wine
- 1.5 ounces 40% (80 proof) distilled spirits

(examples: gin, rum, vodka, whiskey)

Excessive alcohol use includes:

- **Binge Drinking**
  - For women, 4 or more drinks consumed on one occasion
  - For men, 5 or more drinks consumed on one occasion

- **Heavy Drinking**
  - For women, 8 or more drinks per week
  - For men, 15 or more drinks per week

- **Any alcohol used by pregnant women**

- **Any alcohol used by those under the age of 21 years**

If you choose to drink, do so in moderation:

- **FOR WOMEN**, up to 1 drink a day
- **FOR MEN**, up to 2 drinks a day

**DON’T DRINK AT ALL** if you are under the age of 21, or if you are or may be pregnant, or have health problems that could be made worse by drinking.

**NO ONE** should begin drinking or drink more frequently based on potential health benefits.

National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Division of Population Health
Excessive alcohol use has immediate effects that increase the risk of many harmful health conditions. These are most often the result of binge drinking. Over time, excessive alcohol use can lead to the development of chronic diseases and other serious problems.

**Short-Term Health Risks**

**Injuries**
- Motor vehicle crashes
- Falls
- Drownings
- Burns

**Violence**
- Homicide
- Suicide
- Sexual assault
- Intimate partner violence

**Alcohol poisoning**

**Reproductive health**
- Risky sexual behaviors
- Unintended pregnancy
- Sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV
- Miscarriage
- Stillbirth
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs)

**Long-Term Health Risks**

**Chronic diseases**
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Liver disease
- Digestive problems

**Cancers**
- Breast
- Mouth and throat
- Liver
- Colon

**Learning and memory problems**
- Dementia
- Poor school performance

**Mental health**
- Depression
- Anxiety

**Social problems**
- Lost productivity
- Family problems
- Unemployment

**Alcohol dependence**