

April is Alcohol Awareness Month



Many people occasionally drink alcohol as a way to relax or socialize. But for millions of others, alcohol use affects their health, work, and personal lives.

To recognize the serious issue of alcohol abuse, April has been designated as “Alcohol Awareness Month.”

Who abuses alcohol?

Alcohol abuse affects people from all walks of life. You can't always tell just by looking at someone that their lives are affected by alcohol. They may be a teenager who spends their weekends binge drinking, or a businessman who sneaks drinks after work “just to relax”. Or, they may be a member of a family that has been torn apart by years of alcohol use. In fact, about 30% of Americans are affected by alcohol abuse.²

It's estimated that 11,318 American youth try alcohol for the first time each day. It is the most used and abused drug in the United States today.⁴

What causes alcohol abuse?

There are many different factors that can contribute to alcohol use. Here are a few examples of the reasons people may use alcohol.

- *Genetic* – Although genes alone don't cause someone to abuse alcohol, it can make them more likely to become dependent on alcohol.
- *Psychological* – Some people use alcohol because they feel it helps them cope with their problems or escape from their feelings. They may also feel it helps them relax and unwind.
- *Social* – Peer pressure, traditions, and special occasions are all situations that sometimes lead to alcohol use. Some people feel that alcohol use makes them more social and helps them to fit in.
- *Environmental* – Certain situations such as poverty, abuse, or a family history of alcohol abuse may lead to alcohol use.

What are the effects of alcohol abuse?

The effects of alcohol use can vary greatly from one person to another. How a person is affected by alcohol depends on many factors, such as their age, sex, weight, the amount of food they've eaten, and the type and amount of alcohol they drank.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month



There are many physical effects that can be caused by alcohol use. Here are just some of the ways alcohol can impact someone.

Short-term effects:

- Impaired judgment and coordination
- Dizziness
- Talkativeness
- Slurred speech
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Memory loss and blackouts

Long-term effects:

- Withdrawal symptoms once alcohol use is stopped
- Damage to vital organs such as the brain, heart, liver, and stomach.
- Worsening of certain medical conditions
- Increased risk for certain types of cancer
- Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) – for children whose mothers drank during their pregnancy. FAS is marked by developmental disabilities and physical abnormalities.

100,000 Americans die from alcohol-related causes each year.¹ In fact, alcohol use is a leading cause of death among youth, especially teenagers.

Excessive alcohol use can lead to automobile accidents, increased aggression and violence, suicide, and problems at home, school, and work, and with personal relationships.

What are the warning signs of alcohol abuse?

Sometimes people who abuse alcohol have a hard time seeing they have a problem. However, if they hide or lie about their alcohol use, or are confronted by friends or family about their alcohol use, this could be a sign that there is a problem.

Consider the following questions to help you decide if you or someone you know has a problem with alcohol:³

- Do you drink alone when you feel angry or sad?
- Does your drinking ever make you late for work?
- Does your drinking worry your family?
- Do you ever drink after telling yourself you won't?
- Do you ever forget what you did while drinking?
- Do you get headaches or have a hangover after drinking?

If you answered "yes" to any of the above questions, you may have a problem with alcohol.

“CIGNA” and the “Tree of Life” logo are registered service marks of CIGNA Intellectual Property, Inc., licensed for use by CIGNA Corporation and its operating subsidiaries. All products and services are provided exclusively by such operating subsidiaries and not by CIGNA Corporation. Such operating subsidiaries include International Rehabilitation Associates, Inc. (Intracorp), CIGNA Behavioral Health, Inc., vielifile Limited, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company and HMO subsidiaries of CIGNA Health Corporation.

©2009 CIGNA

April is Alcohol Awareness Month



If think you might have a problem with alcohol use, contact your doctor or your Employee Assistance Program (EAP). They can direct you to someone who can help you to regain control of your life and start living better today.

Alcohol Awareness Month is sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (www.ncadd.org)

References:

- ¹ American Psychological Association. (2004). *Understanding Alcohol Use Disorders and Their Treatment*. Retrieved March 11, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.apahelpcenter.org/articles/article.php?id=45>
- ² Hitti, Miranda. (2007). *Alcohol Abuse, Alcoholism Common*. Web MD. Retrieved March 11, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.webmd.com/mental-health/alcohol-abuse/news/20070702/alcohol-abuse-alcoholism-common>
- ³ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (1996). *How to Cut Down on Your Drinking*. Retrieved March 10, 2008 from the World Wide Web: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/handout.htm>
- ⁴ The Marin Institute. (n.d.) *Alcohol and Youth Facts*. Retrieved March 17, 2008 from the World Wide Web: http://www.marininstitute.org/Youth/alcohol_youth.htm

Any references in this material to other organizations or companies, include their Internet Websites, is not an endorsement or warranty of services, information, or products provided by those organizations or companies.

This material is provided by CIGNA for informational/educational purposes only. It is not intended as medical/clinical advice. Only a healthcare provider can make a diagnosis or recommend a treatment plan. For more information about your behavioral health benefits, you can call the member services or behavioral health telephone number listed on your healthcare identification card.

“CIGNA” and the “Tree of Life” logo are registered service marks of CIGNA Intellectual Property, Inc., licensed for use by CIGNA Corporation and its operating subsidiaries. All products and services are provided exclusively by such operating subsidiaries and not by CIGNA Corporation. Such operating subsidiaries include International Rehabilitation Associates, Inc. (Intracorp), CIGNA Behavioral Health, Inc., vieliflife Limited, Connecticut General Life Insurance Company and HMO subsidiaries of CIGNA Health Corporation.

©2009 CIGNA