



MEN

Drinking & Drugs



Don't let yourself be pushed into taking drinks or drugs that you don't want.

Drug or alcohol use can cause problems for anyone. Men face some special dangers, including strong social pressure to use alcohol or other drugs, and certain health hazards. Knowing about these issues can help you to make wise choices about your own health and contribute to a happy family and social life.

Peer Pressure

Your decisions about whether to drink or to take drugs may have a lot to do with the attitudes and opinions of your friends and coworkers. How much you take, and when, may also be affected by their ways of doing things.

Why are men encouraged by their peers to drink or take drugs? Some people think that drinking or drug use proves how much of a man one is. Men are often brought up to be tough and unemotional. Drug use lets some men relax from this pressure. Drinking in order to “lighten up” business luncheons, to help them socialize comfortably or to let out pent-up emotions in a socially acceptable way is often encouraged.

Effects of Abuse

Drug abuse has many harmful effects. Health risks increase for heart disease, cancer, mental illness and even death. Drug use may decrease the levels of testosterone in a man's body, which affects sexual desire and performance. Because drugs often lower a man's inhibitions and dull his thinking, he may not notice this at first. Some drugs also cause a man to produce fewer sperm (or abnormal sperm), making it more difficult to conceive healthy children.

One's work life can also be affected by drug or alcohol abuse. You might have work-related accidents, be less productive or have other performance problems.

If you have a family, their love, trust and respect are probably very important to you. Drug use can make you act in ways that embarrass or hurt your family. Injuries can be physical as well as emotional. Some men become violent when they are “under the influence,” while others may cause auto crashes that can injure or even kill people.

Steps You Can Take

You can make choices about drug use that will improve your life and the lives of your loved ones and friends. Here are some suggestions:

- Don't let yourself be pushed into taking drinks or drugs that you don't want.
- If you plan to become a father, don't use drugs.
- If you host a party, don't push your guests to drink. Make sure that if you serve alcohol you also offer soft drinks and food. And make sure no one drives under the influence.
- If you have a hard time controlling your drug use, seek help from 12-step programs or health professionals who are knowledgeable about chemical dependencies. Ask your employee assistance program for a referral or check the phone book.