

Alcohol is the most used and abused drug in the world, for this reason there is no wonder why we have alcohol problems. The most common problem is alcoholism. Alcoholism is a chronic usually progressive disease that includes both a psychological and a physical addiction to alcohol. Alcoholics know what will happen to them when they drink but they are so addicted they can't stop drinking. Alcohol becomes the most important part of the person's life. It totally consumes them, all their thoughts and actions have to do are somehow associated with alcohol. Alcoholism like other illnesses will become worse without treatment and remain life-threatening as long as it is left untreated. The psychological dependence an alcoholic has is when they think alcohol is necessary and life will not be good without it. The physical dependence an alcoholic has is when their body becomes so used to the drug that it now needs alcohol to function without pain. Alcoholism is not a disease experienced only by adults. Alcoholism, like any illness, can strike at any age. Ten percent of the adult drinkers in the U.S are considered alcoholics or at least experience drinking problems to some degree. Surveys have shown that more than one out of three Americans have a personal friend or relative who has had a drinking problem for ten years or longer. Almost two out of three Americans report that they know someone who drinks too much. It is estimated that there are 18 million alcoholic or problem drinkers in the U.S. For every alcoholic there are at least four other people who are affected by the alcoholic. This means that in the U.S. there are at least seventy-two million other people dealing with the disease somehow. Many people believe that alcoholics are people that are the skid row winos and bums. This is a common misconception, actually ninety-four percent of alcoholics live at home, while only six percent are the skid row type. Ninety percent of all alcoholics are employed, and many work for years before their alcoholism becomes so bad that they cannot perform their job. Federal officials estimate that the abuse of alcohol costs the economy well over one-hundred billion dollars every year. Alcohol does this by making people be less productive at work, taking more sick days, sustaining on the job injuries, collecting more workmen's compensation, and increasing health insurance premiums.

Physical Effects

Prolonged alcohol use like that of an alcoholic can lead to permanent damage of your body. The liver is the organ of the body most vulnerable to damage by alcohol because the liver is where the alcohol is broken down. The liver may become worn out from the daily task of removing alcohol from the blood, this may cause the liver to be

unable to perform as well in removing other harmful substances. One of the most dangerous diseases of the liver caused by long-term alcohol use is cirrhosis of the liver. Cirrhosis causes the liver to become inflamed and scarred, which eventually kills the liver and the person. Over fourteen thousand deaths a year from cirrhosis are directly related to alcohol. Alcohol causes an increase in blood pressure, this makes the heart pump harder to move blood around the body. Alcohol can cause an increase in heart rate while at the same time reducing the ability of the heart muscle to pump, it can also cause abnormal heart rhythms. Long-term and heavy use of alcohol can cause a condition of the heart called alcoholic cardiomyopathy, this impairs the heart muscles ability to contract and eventually fail. Alcohol's action on the brain is what causes people to feel intoxicated. A sudden intake of large amounts of alcohol may result in death, this is because nerve impulses to the brain are dangerously blocked. There are over two hundred deaths a year from this kind of accidental alcohol poisoning. Alcohol also has an increasing effect on our brain chemistry this is what causes are change behavior. This can make people do things that they would not do when they are sober, this a is common sign of an alcoholic. Test have shown that long-term drinking like that of an alcoholic can lead to a measurable loss of thinking ability. Over time heavy drinking can also cause permanent damage to the central nervous system. Research has shown that there seems to be an association between alcohol and cancer, with heavy drinkers having the highest risk. Drinkers seem to get cancer more frequently than non-drinkers. Scientists believe that alcohol weakens body tissue and makes them more susceptible to cancer causing substances. Alcohol is considered a factor in over seven thousand cases of cancer a year. Alcohol hurts heavy drinkers health in general, consuming large amounts of alcohol over a long period of time harms their bodies and shortens their life. On average, heavy drinkers are taking twelve to fifteen years off their lives.

How People Become Alcoholics

It is believed that there are many different ways a person can become a alcoholic. Alcohol alone does not cause alcoholism, if it did everyone who drank would be any alcoholic. There are a number of factors that lead to alcoholism. The way most scientists think you become an alcoholic is through genetics. Because of genetics people tend to inherit an inability to handle alcohol, just like other people inherit other diseases from their parents.

This is the reason that alcoholism seems to run in families from generation to generation.

This is why some people become alcoholics from the first time they drink, because of the

genetics they become hooked from the start. Experiments testing the genetic factor have

been conducted by taking children of alcoholics at birth and placing them in non-alcoholic

families, despite having no exposure to the alcoholic parents the children had a four times

higher risk of becoming an alcoholic than children of non-alcoholic parents.

Another

reason people become alcoholics is the environment they grow up in. If children are

exposed to drinking as a activity in which drinkers are careful and moderate they are more

likely to become a responsible drinker. If the children grow up seeing heavy alcohol use

and abuse they are more likely to use alcohol in that way. Also, if the children are

exposed to large amounts of peer pressure from the kids around them they are more likely

to drink. Alcoholism is also a disease that can be acquired over a long period of time.

Alcoholics may start out as social drinkers who are able to control their drinking, but they

may lose this control and be carried into the alcoholic class. Some people may drink daily

just out of habit on a controlled level. But they may become careless about their habits

and the step across the line to alcohol dependence is a short one. Once they are dependent

on the alcohol they will build a tolerance to it, this will cause them to drink more and more

to get the same effects. Drinking more only makes their dependence worse and eventually

they will develop into a full blow alcoholic.

Women Alcoholics

Alcoholism is a disease people see as mostly a male problem. But this is incorrect, as

many as half of the nation's alcoholics are women. The reason it seems there are not as

many female alcoholics is that female alcoholics are usually closet drinkers. You rarely

see a woman alcoholic publicly show alcoholic behavior, while with men it is very common. It is easier for a woman alcoholic to damage her body than it is for a

man. The

physical damage is worse than men's because women wait longer to seek help because society places a greater stigma on o woman who drinks to much. Women's livers

don't

process alcohol as well as men's. This makes women alcoholics susceptible to developing

cirrhosis and other liver problems with lower levels of alcohol in their bodies and after

shorter periods of drinking. Large amounts of alcohol in women may interfere with fertility by upsetting the hormones in their body and it can increase the chance of a

a

miscarriage. Women alcoholics who become pregnant can cause great damage to their babies, this damage is called fetal alcohol syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome can

cause physical deformities and mental retardation. Women alcoholics also have a higher rate of relapse than males.

Violence and Alcoholism

Being an alcoholic probably means you will be under the influence of alcohol quite a bit, which increases your chances of doing something stupid or illegal more than the regular person. Alcohol causes a change in brain chemistry which results in changed behavior such as increased aggression and reduced fear which may lead us to take needless risks. Alcohol can cause people to be rude, verbally abusive, and physically threatening. These factors almost always lead to trouble, such as fights with family, friends, or even complete strangers. Some people use alcohol to express hostile feelings that they wouldn't express when sober. Alcohol is a major factor in the committing crimes. Two out of three murders, one out of three rapes, and two out of five results are connected to the use of alcohol. This comes of no surprise to me because it is almost everyday you here of someone committing a crime while under the influence. Traffic deaths caused by alcohol are very common in the U.S. This shows that alcohol not only hurts the people drinking but also innocent people. One out of two traffic deaths are caused by alcohol and nearly twenty-five thousand Americans die each year as a result of the eight hundred thousand car accidents caused by alcohol. Alcoholics are seven times more likely to be involved in fatal accidents than non-alcoholics. Alcohol is also related to three out of five cases of child abuse, up to one out of two incidents of domestic violence, one out of three suicides, and up to seven out of ten deaths by drowning. What I'm trying to point out here is that when people use alcohol, especially frequently and heavily like alcoholics do, they are just setting themselves up to get hurt or hurt someone else.

Getting Help

Early identification and treatment of alcoholism is the best way to prevent alcohol from ruining your life. The first and most important thing an alcoholic can do is admit that they have a problem. It is unlikely that the alcoholic will be the first to admit it, usually they will deny they have a problem, first they will deny their problem to others and then to themselves. But once the alcoholic admits they have a problem, they are on the road to victory. After they admit they have a problem they have to decide for themselves that they want to stop drinking for good. Another very crucial part of recovery is recognizing alcoholism itself as the problem needing attention, rather than saying it is just secondary to another underlying problem. There are many places an alcoholic can get help from

like:

family, friends, health-care workers, Alcoholics Anonymous, and alcoholism counselors.

They can provide the moral support the alcoholic needs to get well. Alcoholics may need

to check into a detox center if really bad, because the withdrawals can be very painful and

could possibly cause death. Withdrawal reactions can include any or all of these: high

fever, loss of appetite, nausea, uncontrollable shaking, hallucinations, and possible coma

or death. Alcoholism is a disease that cannot be totally cured but people can recover and

return to a normal way of life. Recovering depends on total abstinence from alcohol.

Recovering alcohol's can never touch alcohol again because their addiction is too strong.

Alcoholism is a very serious disease that affects a large number of people. I think if we

educate children at an early age to use alcohol in moderation and within a reasonable limit

we would have less cases of alcoholism. We also now have the ability, through technology, to detect which people will most likely develop into alcoholics. I

think with

this information we should get these people help right away, the sooner the better. There

is still hope for today's and tomorrow's alcoholics because they are able to recover from

alcoholism. It will only get easier to recover from it if more people get involved in the

fight against alcoholism.

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