



Employee NEWSLETTER

Employee Assistance Program
April 2023

Binge Drinking: The Beginning of a Problem

Adapted from The Hope House

Binge drinking is a common health risk that people who use alcohol may deal with. In fact, about one in six U.S. adults binge drink about four times a month.

While binge drinking may not be as severe as a problem as alcoholism, it can be a warning sign of alcohol use disorder. Learning more about binge drinking will help you better understand the problem and know how you can overcome the issue.

Binge Drinking Definition

Binge drinking is defined as a period of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level to 0.08% or above. But, what does this mean? Let's look at a more digestible understanding of what this form of drinking is.

To better understand this definition, a drink is considered:

- One 12-ounce beer
- One 5-ounce glass of wine
- One 1.50-ounce shot of distilled liquor (can be in a mixed drink)

This form of drinking is a serious health problem that can lead to major dangerous, and potentially life-threatening, problems. Despite the potential consequences of binge drinking, it is important to understand the difference between this and actual alcoholism, because there is a difference.

Binge Drinking vs. Alcoholism

Despite how problematic binge drinking can be, most of the people who do binge drink do not have severe alcohol use disorder.

While bingeing alcohol is generally considered a one-off moment, alcoholism is consistent behavior and action in which the individual cannot control their drinking and uses it as a coping mechanism throughout the day, each day.

This is obviously a dangerous thing and can lead to major health problems, but alcoholism is on a different level of concern and can cause emotional, social, physical, and professional problems that lead to ripple effects that not only involve the user's life, but can even affect those he or she is close to.

Who Binge Drinks?

Binge drinking is the most common in the young adult category of people aged 18-34 and it is twice as common among men over women. In fact, about 80% of this excessive type of drinking is done by men – putting them more at risk for various health problems associated with this.

It is also worth noting that this form of drinking is more common in households with income levels above \$75,000 or more as well as higher levels of education.

Binge Drinking in College Students

One of population of people that binge drinks often is college students.

Unfortunately, all of this alcohol use can lead to dangerous consequences. Statistics from the National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism shows that over 1500 college students aged 18-24 die each year from alcohol-related causes. Along with death,

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assault, sexual assault, academic problems, and risk of addiction are all potential problems that can also occur from this.

Binge drinking in college while juggling classes and extracurriculars can lead people to believe they are high-functioning alcoholics. However, this is a dangerous path and can lead to major social, emotional and professional issue that can be detrimental to a person's livelihood.

Binge Drinking Side Effects

There are a number of side effects and problems that can be caused by binge drinking. Obviously, any form of alcohol use can lead to certain health consequences such as:

- Increased risk of liver problems
- High blood pressure
- Increased risk of stroke
- Digestive problems
- Increased risk of cancer

Along with these effects of drinking alcohol, this type of drinking specifically can lead to its own problems and potential side effects. Some of these issues include:

- Unintentional injuries due to car crashes, falls, etc.
- Alcohol poisoning
- More prone to violence including physical and sexual assault
- Increased risk of sexually transmitted diseases
- Memory and learning disabilities

Along with these problems, those who are binge drinking regularly are also at risk of another major problem: alcohol use disorder.

While binge drinking isn't necessarily considered alcohol use disorder, it is something that it can lead to when the problem is consistent enough.

How to Stop Binge Drinking

If you or someone you love is using alcohol in excess regularly, and you are worried that this problem may evolve into something more serious, there are things that you can do to work to overcome it.

There are a few things you can do to work to cut back

on drinking and maybe even stop drinking entirely. Let's take a look at three:

- 1. Create a Plan** – Planning ahead is a great way to avoid spontaneous drinks that lead to binge drinking. Perhaps you can tell yourself that you're only drinking on the weekends and you're going to limit yourself to a max of 2-3 drinks those nights – nothing more. Developing a plan like this and sticking to it would be a great way to avoid drinking more and more often than you intend.
- 2. Tell your Family and Friends** – By telling your friends and family about your plan to cut back on drinking, not only will they help hold you accountable, but you also will likely be more inclined to stick to your plan out of a sense of commitment. Moreover, some friends and family may join you in your plan, helping provide additional support.
- 3. Ask for Help** – Sometimes this problem can be more serious than you let on or believe it is. If this is the case and you are still having trouble kicking your problem, you may need to seek our professional help in the form of Alcoholic's Anonymous meetings or inpatient rehab services if your situation calls for it.

Furthermore, if you are looking for help for a drinking problem that you believe has already developed into alcoholism, seeking professional help is your best chance at beating your addiction. First Choice Health EAP has resources available for you. Please call us at (800) 777-4114 if you would like to be connected with a counselor. We're here for you!

References:

<https://www.thehopehouse.com/alcohol-abuse/related/binge-drinking/>