

COURAGE TO CARE

A Health Campaign of Uniformed Services University, www.usuhs.edu, and the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress, Bethesda, Maryland, www.CSTSonline.org

ALCOHOL AND YOUR HEALTH

Most people who drink alcohol do so socially and responsibly. However, excessive alcohol use, either drinking everyday or almost everyday at levels exceeding safe drinking and over a long period of time, or binge drinking (drinking heavily to get drunk) can affect one's health, relationships, and job performance.

Deployments, family separations, single parenting, and reintegration stressors can make service members, their spouses/partners, and even their adolescent children vulnerable to alcohol misuse, abuse, or dependence.

Some people use alcohol in an attempt to cope with stress, depression, anxiety, loneliness, or other unpleasant conditions. Deployments, family separations, single parenting, and reintegration stressors can make service members, their spouses/partners, and even their adolescent children vulnerable to alcohol misuse, abuse, or dependence.

Drinking and You: Important Facts for Service Members, Families and Friends

Intoxication (getting drunk) can cause immediate problems:

- Injuries from traffic accidents, household mishaps, cuts, falls, drowning, burns, and injuries with weapons.
- Violence, including abuse of intimate partners and children. (More than one-third of physical abuse within families involves alcohol, 2/3 of intimate partner violence involves alcohol; and alcohol is a leading factor in child abuse and neglect).
- Social embarrassment, regret, and guilt feelings over things a person would have never done if sober.
- Increased risk of sexual assault and risky sexual behaviors such as unprotected sex or sex with multiple partners, which can lead to unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and physical or psychological trauma.
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency that results from very high levels of alcohol in the blood and can lead to passing out, coma, or even death.

Longer-term excessive use of alcohol can also cause or contribute to chronic problems:

- Severe personal losses in relationships, jobs, and living conditions.
- Worsening of any psychological problems such as anxiety or depression, and may increase risk of suicide.
- Physical illness and death from a range of medical problems including:

- ❑ Heart—increased blood pressure, irregular heart beats, damage to the heart muscle, and heart attacks.
- ❑ Brain and nerve damage.
- ❑ Stomach—painful inflammation (gastritis), ulcers, and bleeding.
- ❑ Liver damage that can progress to cirrhosis (death of the liver).
- ❑ Cancers involving the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, prostate, and breast.

Signs that you or someone you care about may be misusing alcohol:

- Getting drunk, drinking every day, or needing to drink more to get the same buzz.
- Drinking to “forget” about your problems.
- Driving after drinking, DUI, fighting, arrests, or legal problems relating to drinking.
- Continuing to drink although it is interfering with family, friends, health, job, or other responsibilities.
- Drinking to “treat” a hangover.
- Drinking more than you planned, or unable to control your drinking.

If you or someone you care about is having a problem with alcohol, help is available. Don't wait until you or your loved one is suffering from the advanced personal and health consequences of alcohol misuse. Talk to your doctor or someone you trust. Listed below are some phone numbers and websites that you can go to for more information and help (all are free and confidential).

Continued

Resources

- **Post-deployment mental health services** (877) 877-3647 or https://screening.mentalhealthscreening.org/military_ndsd provides an interactive telephone self-assessment program for depression and alcohol problems for service members and military families. Callers will be provided with immediate results and phone numbers where they can call for treatment or educational resources.
- **Military One Source** (800) 342-9647, or <https://www.militaryonesource.mil/contact-us> for information and referral sources for service members and families
- **Phone numbers for local Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)** and meetings for family members (Al-Anon, Ala-teen)

can be found at or near the first entries of the white pages in any phone directory. Each group also has web links with information, meetings, and much more:

- ❑ <https://www.aa.org/>
 - ❑ <https://al-anon.org/>
- **Other websites include:**
 - ❑ <https://www.ownyourlimits.org/>
 - ❑ <https://www.hbo.com/documentaries/addiction>
 - ❑ <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets>
 - ❑ <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/publicaciones-en-espa%C3%B1ol>

COURAGE TO CARE is a health promotion campaign of Uniformed Services University. Its purpose is two-fold: to provide quality health information reflecting our University's excellence in military medicine and to present it in a friendly, appealing format for immediate distribution for the health promotion needs in your community.



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