

Alcohol Addiction: Do I have a problem?

Do you want to have more fun, to fit in, to cope better with your problems? It's as easy as taking a drink—if you believe what you see on TV and in movies. But don't fool yourself. The more you regularly rely on alcohol to relax you or make you feel good, the closer you move toward addiction. If you decide you are on the path to addiction, you can take action to change your behavior. And you can find caring people to help you.

Do I have a problem with alcohol?

You may drink to feel more likable, to loosen up, or to relax. But drinking has a serious downside. Alcohol can lead to slurred speech, poor judgment, and risky behavior. Alcohol can also lead to serious health problems. These include liver disease and heart disease. It can also cause loss of mental function. To find out if you may have a problem with alcohol, think about the questions below. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) states any of the symptoms listed below could be cause for concern. Think about these and talk with your healthcare provider.

In the past year, have I:

- Had times when I drank more or longer than I meant to?
- Tried to cut back or stop drinking more than once, but couldn't?
- Spent a lot of time drinking? Or being sick after I drank?
- Wanted a drink so badly that I couldn't think of anything else?
- Had family, school, or work problems linked to my drinking?
- Kept drinking even though it causes problems with my relationships with my family, friends, or peers?
- Given up doing things I enjoy, so I could drink?
- Taken part in risky behaviors after drinking? These may include unprotected sex or operating a car or machine after drinking.
- Kept drinking even though it makes another health problem worse? Or even if it makes me feel anxious or depressed?
- Had to drink more than I used to just to get the effect I want?
- Had withdrawal symptoms when the alcohol starts to wear off? These can include shakiness, insomnia, sweating, a racing heart, or digestive upset.