

It's April Fools' Day, but excessive alcohol consumption is no joke. To acknowledge Alcohol Awareness Month this April, the Wellness Works Committee hopes you will find these common questions and answers related to alcohol helpful.

Can consuming alcohol be beneficial to my health?

Yes, if alcohol is consumed in moderation. Some potential benefits include a reduced risk for cardiovascular disease (heart attacks, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease) and psychological benefits, such as reduced stress and anxiety. If you are under the age of 65, moderation is defined as one drink a day if you are female and two drinks a day if you are male. Remember that one drink is considered 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. of wine, or 1.5 oz. of 80-proof distilled spirits. For more information, go to these links: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh24-1/05-11.pdf> , <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/aa16.htm> , <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alcohol/SC00024>

What are some of the negative consequences of consuming more than moderate amounts of alcohol?

Some effects of excessive alcohol consumption include high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, cancer (mouth, liver, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, and breast), pancreatitis, cirrhosis of the liver, dependency, suicide and accidents. From the perspective of the workplace, alcohol can negatively affect job performance. Go to: http://www.workplace.samhsa.gov/WPWorkit/pdf/effects_of_alcohol_and%20other_drugs_on_job_fs.pdf .

How can I assess my alcohol consumption?

Complete these quick online assessments:

Drinking self-test: <http://alcoholscreening.org/AS/index.aspx?CID=86>

The CAGE Questionnaire: <http://counsellingresource.com/quizzes/alcohol-cage/index.html>

If I'm drinking too much, how can I cut down?

If you aren't dependent on alcohol, but think reducing alcohol consumption would be beneficial, writing down reasons for wanting to cut back can be a good point to start. Using an alcohol spending calculator, (<http://getfit.samhsa.gov/Alcohol/tests/spending.aspx>) and alcohol calorie calculator (<http://getfit.samhsa.gov/Alcohol/Tests/alcoholcalc.aspx>) may provide added incentives for reducing consumption. Then, create goals to reduce drinking and keep a diary of drinking patterns. Go to this link for more details: <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/handout.htm> .

Where can get help for alcohol dependency?

If you, a friend or family member is experiencing alcohol dependency, many resources for recovery are available. This link helps find a treatment facility close to you <http://dasis3.samhsa.gov/PrxInput.aspx?STATE=Minnesota> . Most communities also offer Alcoholics Anonymous meetings (see: <http://www.aa.org/?Media=PlayFlash>) and organizations, such as Hazelden (<http://www.hazelden.org>) are able to answer many questions related to addiction.