

## ABUSE OF ALCOHOL - General Information

### Abuse of Alcohol

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

**What is alcohol abuse?** Alcohol abuse means you drink more than the recommended daily or weekly limits. You may be drinking alcohol regularly or drinking large amounts in a short period of time (binge drinking). You continue to drink even though it causes legal, work, or relationship problems.

#### What do I need to know about recommended alcohol limits?

- **Men 21 to 64 years** should limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day. Do not have more than 4 drinks in 1 day or more than 14 in 1 week.
- **All women, and men 65 or older** should limit alcohol to 1 drink in a day. Do not have more than 3 drinks in 1 day or more than 7 in 1 week. No amount of alcohol is okay during pregnancy.

#### What are the signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse?

- Loss of interest in activities, work, and school
- Hiding alcohol, or drinking in private
- Depression, or guilt about drinking
- Constant thoughts about alcohol
- Drinking in the morning to relieve the effects of a hangover
- Not being able to control the amount you drink
- Restlessness, or erratic and violent behavior

#### What health problems can alcohol abuse cause?

- Cancer in your liver, pancreas, stomach, colon, kidney, or breast
- Stroke or a heart attack
- Liver, kidney, or lung disease
- Blackouts, memory loss, brain damage, or dementia
- Diabetes, immune system problems, or thiamine (vitamin B1) deficiency
- Problems for you and your baby if you drink while pregnant

**How is alcohol abuse treated?** Treatment helps you understand the reasons you abuse alcohol. Counselors and therapists provide you with support and help you find ways to cope instead of drinking. You may need inpatient treatment to provide a controlled environment. You may need outpatient treatment after your inpatient treatment is complete.

- **Detoxification (detox)** is a program used to flush alcohol from your body. During detox, medicines are given to help prevent withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking alcohol.
- **In brief intervention therapy**, a healthcare provider helps you think about your alcohol use differently. He or she helps you set goals to decrease the amount of alcohol you drink. Therapy may continue after you leave the hospital.
- **Vitamin supplements** such as B1 may be needed. Alcohol can make it hard for your body to absorb enough vitamin B1. You may be given vitamin B1 if you have low levels. It is also given to prevent brain damage from alcohol use.

#### What can I do to manage my alcohol use?

- **Decrease the amount you drink.** This can help prevent health problems such as brain, heart, and liver damage, high blood pressure, diabetes, and cancer. If you cannot stop completely, healthcare providers can help you set goals to decrease the amount you drink.
- **Plan weekly alcohol use.** You will be less likely to drink more than the recommended limit if you plan ahead.

- **Have food when you drink alcohol.** Food will prevent alcohol from getting into your system too quickly. Eat before you have your first alcohol drink.
- **Time your drinks carefully.** Have no more than 1 drink in an hour. Have a liquid such as water, coffee, or a soft drink between alcohol drinks.
- **Do not drive if you have had alcohol.** Make sure someone who has not been drinking can help you get home.
- **Do not drink alcohol if you are taking medicine.** Alcohol is dangerous when you combine it with certain medicines, such as acetaminophen or blood pressure medicine. Talk to your healthcare provider about all the medicines you currently take.

**Where can I find support and more information?**

- Alcoholics Anonymous  
Web Address: <http://www.aa.org>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  
PO Box 2345  
Rockville,MD 20847-2345  
Web Address: <http://www.samhsa.gov>

**Call your local emergency number (911 in the US) for any of the following:**

- You have sudden chest pain or trouble breathing.
- You want to harm yourself or others.
- You have a seizure or have shaking or trembling.

**When should I call my doctor?**

- You have hallucinations (you see or hear things that are not real).
- You cannot stop vomiting or you vomit blood.
- You need help to stop drinking alcohol.
- You have questions or concerns about your condition or care.

**CARE AGREEMENT:**

You have the right to help plan your care. Learn about your health condition and how it may be treated. Discuss treatment options with your healthcare providers to decide what care you want to receive. You always have the right to refuse treatment.



### Cigarette Smoking and Your Health

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

**What are the risks to my health if I smoke tobacco?** Nicotine and other chemicals found in tobacco and e-cigarettes can damage every cell in your body. Even if you are a light smoker, you have an increased risk for cancer, heart disease, and lung disease. If you are pregnant or have diabetes, smoking increases your risk for complications.

#### What are the benefits to my health if I stop smoking?

- You decrease respiratory symptoms such as coughing, wheezing, and shortness of breath.
- You reduce your risk for cancers of the lung, mouth, throat, kidney, bladder, pancreas, stomach, and cervix. If you already have cancer, you increase the benefits of chemotherapy. You also reduce your risk for cancer returning or a second cancer from developing.
- You reduce your risk for heart disease, blood clots, heart attack, and stroke.
- You reduce your risk for lung infections, and diseases such as pneumonia, asthma, chronic bronchitis, and emphysema.
- Your circulation improves. More oxygen can be delivered to your body. If you have diabetes, you lower your risk for complications, such as kidney, artery, and eye diseases. You also lower your risk for nerve damage. Nerve damage can lead to amputations, poor vision, and blindness.
- You improve your body's ability to heal and to fight infections.

**What are the health benefits to others if I stop smoking?** Tobacco is harmful to nonsmokers who breathe in your secondhand smoke. The following are ways the health of others around you may improve when you stop smoking:

- You lower the risks for lung cancer and heart disease in nonsmoking adults.
- If you are pregnant, you lower the risk for miscarriage, early delivery, low birth weight, and stillbirth. You also lower your baby's risk for SIDS, obesity, developmental delay, and neurobehavioral problems, such as ADHD.
- If you have children, you lower their risk for ear infections, colds, pneumonia, bronchitis, and asthma.

#### Where can I find more information and support to stop smoking?

- Smokefree.gov  
Phone: 1-800-784-8669  
Web Address: [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)

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## WEIGHT MANAGEMENT - General Information

### Weight Management

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW:

**Why is important to manage my weight?** Being overweight increases your risk of health conditions such as heart disease, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and certain types of cancer. It can also increase your risk for osteoarthritis, sleep apnea, and other respiratory problems. Aim for a slow, steady weight loss. Even a small amount of weight loss can lower your risk of health problems. There's a lot of focus in the medical world on the health effects of being overweight, but what about the effects of being underweight? There are certain health risks associated with being underweight including: malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies, or anemia, osteoporosis from too little vitamin D and calcium, decreased immune function, increased risk for complications from surgery, fertility issues caused by irregular menstrual cycles, and growth and development issues, especially in children and teenagers.

**How do I lose weight safely?** A safe and healthy way to lose weight is to eat fewer calories and get regular exercise. You can lose up about 1 pound a week by decreasing the number of calories you eat by 500 calories each day. You can decrease calories by eating smaller portion sizes or by cutting out high-calorie foods. Read labels to find out how many calories are in the foods you eat. You can also burn calories with exercise such as walking, swimming, or biking. You will be more likely to keep weight off if you make these changes part of your lifestyle.

**What if I am underweight?** You may not be eating enough healthy foods with key nutrients to fuel your body. That can cause malnutrition. Over time, malnutrition can affect your health in several different ways that may be noticeable to you or those around you. Your symptoms might include: feeling tired or drained of energy, getting sick often or having trouble fighting off illness, having irregular or skipped periods in females, and experiencing hair thinning or loss, dry skin, or teeth issues

**What is a healthy meal plan that can help me manage my weight?** A healthy meal plan includes a variety of foods, contains fewer calories, and helps you stay healthy. A healthy meal plan includes the following:

- **Eat whole-grain foods more often.** A healthy meal plan should contain fiber. Fiber is the part of grains, fruits, and vegetables that is not broken down by your body. Whole-grain foods are healthy and provide extra fiber in your diet. Some examples of whole-grain foods are whole-wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, and bulgur.
- **Eat a variety of vegetables every day.** Include dark, leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collard greens, and mustard greens. Eat yellow and orange vegetables such as carrots, sweet potatoes, and winter squash.
- **Eat a variety of fruits every day.** Choose fresh or canned fruit (canned in its own juice or light syrup) instead of juice. Fruit juice has very little or no fiber.
- **Eat low-fat dairy foods (if overweight).** Drink fat-free (skim) milk or 1% milk. Eat fat-free yogurt and low-fat cottage cheese. Try low-fat cheeses such as mozzarella and other reduced-fat cheeses.
- **Choose meat and other protein foods that are low in fat (if overweight).** Choose beans or other legumes such as split peas or lentils. Choose fish, skinless poultry (chicken or turkey), or lean cuts of red meat (beef or pork). Before you cook meat or poultry, cut off any visible fat.

- **Use less fat and oil (if overweight).** Try baking foods instead of frying them. Add less fat, such as margarine, sour cream, regular salad dressing and mayonnaise to foods. Eat fewer high-fat foods. Some examples of high-fat foods include french fries, doughnuts, ice cream, and cakes.
- **Eat fewer sweets.** Limit foods and drinks that are high in sugar. This includes candy, cookies, regular soda, and sweetened drinks.

**What are some ways I can decrease calories, if needed?**

- **Eat smaller portions.**
  - Use a small plate with smaller servings.
  - Do not eat second helpings.
  - When you eat at a restaurant, ask for a box and place half of your meal in the box before you eat.
  - Share an entrée with someone else.
- **Replace high-calorie snacks with healthy, low-calorie snacks.**
  - Choose fresh fruit, vegetables, fat-free rice cakes, or air-popped popcorn instead of potato chips, nuts, or chocolate.
  - Choose water or calorie-free drinks instead of soda or sweetened drinks.
- **Do not shop for groceries when you are hungry.** You may be more likely to make unhealthy food choices. Take a grocery list of healthy foods and shop after you have eaten.
- **Eat regular meals.** Do not skip meals. Skipping meals can lead to overeating later in the day. This can make it harder for you to lose weight. Eat a healthy snack in place of a meal if you do not have time to eat a regular meal. Talk with a dietitian to help you create a meal plan and schedule that is right for you.

**How much exercise do I need?** Exercise at least 30 minutes per day on most days of the week. Some examples of exercise include walking, biking, dancing, and swimming. You can also fit in more physical activity by taking the stairs instead of the elevator or parking farther away from stores. Ask your healthcare provider about the best exercise plan for you.

**What other things should I consider as I try to lose weight?**

- Be aware of situations that may give you the urge to overeat, such as eating while watching television. Find ways to avoid these situations. For example, read a book, go for a walk, or do crafts.
- Meet with a weight loss support group or friends who are also trying to lose weight. This may help you stay motivated to continue working on your weight loss goals.

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