



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Last Call for Alcohol

Communication Between Health Professionals and Their Patients About Alcohol Use — 44 States and the District of Columbia, 2011

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[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Dr. Gaynes] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm your host, Dr. Robert Gaynes.

Drinking too much alcohol is associated with many health and personal problems, and is responsible for approximately 88,000 deaths a year in the U.S.

Dr. Lela McKnight-Eily is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. She's joining us today to discuss the importance of talking to a health care provider about alcohol use. Welcome to the show, Lela.

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Thank you.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lela, let's start with what is considered excessive alcohol use?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] So, excessive alcohol use includes binge drinking, or four or more drinks within a two to three hour period for women, five or more for men. It also includes exceeding weekly limits which are eight or more for women, 15 or more for men, and *any* use by pregnant women or underage youth.

[Dr. Gaynes] How many people in the United States drink too much?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] About one in three U.S. adults drink too much. Only four percent of the U.S. population are considered alcoholics or are dependent upon alcohol, meaning they can't stop drinking on their own. This means that for every one alcoholic, there are about six people who drink too much who are not alcoholics, and 38 million adults report binge drinking.

[Dr. Gaynes] What health problems are related to excessive alcohol use?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] So, drinking too much is associated with many health problems, including chronic diseases and birth defects, like heart disease, breast cancer, STDs, fetal alcohol spectrum disorders, as well as injury through motor vehicle crashes, violence, and suicide.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lela, is drinking too much more of a problem for any particular age group?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] No, it's really a problem across the board. We know that starting to drink at an early age can lead to increased use down the road but there are problems within each age group, including older adults.

[Dr. Gaynes] What are some strategies for reducing alcohol consumption?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Alcohol screening and brief counseling is an effective strategy. All patients are screened, for example, at a routine visit. Those who drink too much are counseled by the provider, meaning the provider discusses their use and encourages them to drink less, coming up with a plan. The provider then follows up with the patient, and the very small percentage of alcoholics are referred to specialized treatment.

Community-based strategies, such as increasing taxes and price, have also been found to be very effective.

[Dr. Gaynes] Lela, where can listeners get more information about dealing with excessive alcohol use?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Listeners can go to cdc.gov/alcohol.

[Dr. Gaynes] Thanks, Lela. I've been talking today with CDC's Dr. Lela McKnight-Eily about excessive alcohol use.

Remember, counseling has been proven to be an effective strategy for moderating alcohol consumption. Talk with your health care provider, especially if you're concerned about how drinking is affecting your life.

Until next time, be well. This is Dr. Robert Gaynes for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.