



A CUP OF HEALTH WITH CDC

Excessive Alcohol Use Can Be a Problem

Alcohol Screening and Brief Counseling of Adults — 17 States and the District of Columbia, 2014

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

[Latoya Simmons] Welcome to *A Cup of Health with CDC*, a weekly feature of the *MMWR*, the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. I'm Latoya Simmons, filling in for your host, Ted Pestorius.

Excessive alcoholic consumption can result in severe health, social, and financial problems. Dr. Lela McKnight-Eily is a researcher with CDC's National Center for Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities. She's joining us today to discuss the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption. Welcome to the show.

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Thank you.

[Latoya Simmons] Dr. McKnight-Eily, define excessive alcohol.

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] So, excessive alcohol use includes binge drinking, which is four or more drinks on an occasion for women, five or more drinks on an occasion for men, and an occasion is about two to three hours. Excessive alcohol use also includes high *weekly* consumption, which is eight or more drinks per week for women and 15 or more per week for men. Excessive alcohol use is also *any* alcohol consumption by pregnant women, those under the age of 21, and used by persons who have health conditions or take medications where alcohol use is against their provider's medical advice.

[Latoya Simmons] How common is alcohol misuse in the U.S.?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] So, about one in three U.S. adults misuse alcohol, but only about four percent of U.S. adults are considered *dependent* upon alcohol.

[Latoya Simmons] What are some of the problems associated with excessive drinking?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] Excessive alcohol use is associated with a number of health problems, including birth defects and disabilities in a child exposed to alcohol before birth or fetal alcohol spectrum disorders. Excessive alcohol use is also associated with increases in chronic diseases, like heart disease and breast cancer, and injuries and violence, including motor vehicle crashes, suicide, and homicide.

[Latoya Simmons] What should a person do if they or someone they know is exhibiting signs of drinking too much?

[Dr. McKnight-Eily] If a person is concerned that they are drinking too much, if they are drinking excessively, they should talk to their health professional because that health professional can speak with them about their alcohol use, in relation to their health, and help them to make informed decisions about their alcohol use in the future. If they have concerns that someone they know is exhibiting signs of drinking too much, they can also suggest that that person contact their health professional to find out more about the impact of their alcohol use on their health. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration has a 1-800 number that people can call if they are concerned about their alcohol use. That number is 1-800-662-HELP.

[Latoya Simmons] Where can listeners get more information about excessive alcohol use?

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

[Latoya Simmons] Thanks, Dr. McKnight-Eily. We've been talking today about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption. If you or someone you know is exhibiting signs of alcohol abuse, get help immediately. A health care provider can screen you and provide advice to help prevent problems associated with excessive alcohol consumption.

Until next time, be well. This is Latoya Simmons for *A Cup of Health with CDC*.

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