

Information on Alcoholism

By Allen Smith, eHow User



According to 2006 statistics published by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 61 percent of adults drink alcohol on a regular basis. For most people, moderate alcohol consumption does not represent a problem as long as it is kept to one to two [drinks](#) per day. A drink is defined as one 12 oz. bottle of beer, one 5 oz. glass of wine or 1.5 oz. of distilled spirits. Others, who drink in excess of moderation, are often labeled "alcoholics" or "alcohol abusers." So, what is the difference?

What Distinguishes an Alcohol Abuser

Labeling someone an abuser of alcohol can be a difficult task. What and how much a person drinks has to do with not only the amount of alcohol that he consumes, but how quickly the body metabolizes it and how drinking affects everyday life. While one person can be capable of consuming an enormous amount of alcohol, another can be devastated after a single drink. What does distinguish an alcohol abuser from an alcoholic is the level of dependency or craving for a drink. An abuser also does not typically experience the need to drink more and more to achieve the same level of high.

Four Questions to Determine Alcohol Abuse

Those trained in dealing with alcohol and drug abuse often ask their patients several key questions to help determine whether or not they have an alcohol problem: Have you ever missed work, [school](#) or another major responsibility because of drinking? Do you drink while putting yourself in dangerous situations like driving a [car](#) or operating heavy machinery? Have you ever been arrested or had other legal problems that stemmed from your consumption of alcohol? Do you continue to drink, despite having major relationship problems at home? If you answer "yes" to any one of these questions, you could be an abuser of alcohol.

The Difference Between an Alcohol Abuser and an Alcoholic

As serious as alcohol abuse is, alcoholism is typically a more serious problem that leads to physical and emotional problems and can destroy lives and families. Alcoholism is generally characterized by a "craving" or an uncontrolled need to drink. Alcoholics typically cannot stop drinking once they have started and develop a physical dependence on alcohol that leads to withdrawal symptoms like nausea, anxiety, the "shakes" and sweating when they attempt to quit drinking. The amount of alcohol consumed is not as important to the alcoholic as is the overall effect. People who are predisposed to alcoholism will usually increase their "tolerance" to alcohol, requiring more and more alcohol to achieve the same high.

The 20 Questions

Experts in the field of alcoholism will often administer the "20 Questions" to someone who wonders whether or not they are an alcoholic. They are:

1. Do you lose time from work due to drinking?
2. Is drinking making your home life unhappy?
3. Do you drink because you are shy with other people?

4. Is your drinking affecting your reputation?
5. Have you ever felt remorse after drinking?
6. Have you ever got into financial difficulties as a result of drinking?
7. Do you turn to lower companions and an inferior environment when drinking?
8. Does your drinking make you careless of your family's welfare?
9. Has your ambition decreased since drinking?
10. Do you crave a drink at a definite time?
11. Do you want a drink the next morning?
12. Does drinking cause you to have difficulty in sleeping?
13. Has your efficiency decreased since drinking?
14. Is drinking jeopardizing your job or business?
15. Do you drink to escape from worries or trouble?
16. Do you drink alone?
17. Have you ever had a complete loss of memory as a result of drinking?
18. Has your physician ever treated you for drinking?
19. Do you drink to build up your self-confidence?
20. Have you ever been to a hospital or institution because of drinking?

If you have answered "yes" to any one question, there is a definite possibility that you are an alcoholic. If you have answered yes to any two questions, the chances are good that you are an alcoholic. If you answered yes to three or more of the questions, you are definitely an alcoholic.

Where to Get Help

If you have decided that you may be an alcoholic, there are a number of valuable resources at your disposal. The first and most important decision, however, is to recognize that you do have a problem and require help. Alcoholism is treated much like diabetes or hypertension--as a disease. There are several approaches to treating the disease and which one you choose depends on the severity of your disease and what proves the most successful. For individuals who have suffered severe physical ramifications from prolonged exposure to alcohol, it may be necessary to enter an inpatient alcohol treatment center for detoxification. Under the guidance of healthcare professionals, medications will be administered to rid the body of alcohol. Detoxification is usually followed by a minimum of a 28-day inpatient rehabilitation program. During inpatient programs, patients begin learning how to live life without alcohol. After graduation from an inpatient program, participants are advised to connect with a mentor called a "sponsor" and begin attending regular meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous. The most common suggestion is to attend 90 meetings during the first 90 days of recovery. Successfully recovered alcoholics integrate the principles of Alcoholics Anonymous into their lives and continue attending meetings the rest of their lives.

Resources

- [More about the 20 Questions](#)