



ILCAAAP

Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems

Alcohol Alert - April 3, 2023



9 Ways Alcohol is Killing You Slowly

1. Degrades Your Heart Health

Most of us know that heavy drinking is not good for our hearts. Indeed, the CDC reports that heavy drinking can cause heart disease, but what if you enjoy a glass of wine several times a week?

It now appears that all types of drinking alcohol, even moderate drinking, may be associated with an increased risk for heart disease, according to a study from 2022 on habitual alcohol use and cardiovascular disease risk published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Network*.

2. Increases Cancer Risk

Consuming alcohol is strongly associated with an increased risk of cancer and cancer mortality. In fact, the American Cancer Society recently updated its Guideline for Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention stating it's best "not to drink alcohol at all."

3. Compromises Your Brain

Research shows that alcohol, even in moderate amounts (1-7 drinks a week), is associated with lower total brain volume. The more you drink, the greater the brain volume shrinkage. This has been reflected in brain SPECT imaging at Amen Clinics as well. It's not surprising that

compared with non-drinkers and light drinkers, moderate (more than a drink a day) to heavy drinkers have a 57% higher risk of dementia, according to a population-based study.

4. Greater Risk of Mental Health Disorders

While a little alcohol can take the edge off temporarily, research shows it to be more of a detriment to mental health long-term. Regular, heavy drinking interferes with certain brain chemicals that are critical to good mental health. Alcohol abuse is also associated with higher suicide risk due to its disinhibition, impulsiveness, and impaired judgment effects. Research conducted on completed suicides shows that alcoholics account for roughly 20–40% of all suicides.

5. Increases in Infectious Diseases

Drinking excessively stokes inflammation and impairs the immune response, making you more vulnerable to both bacterial and viral infections, and decreases response to vaccination. For some heavy drinkers during the COVID pandemic, this alcohol-driven hit to the immune system was deadly.

6. More Vulnerable to Injury

According to world statistics, 28.7% of all deaths attributed to alcohol consumption were due to injuries in 2016 (the most recent year of recorded stats). Alcohol consumption is linked to a greater risk of car accidents, drownings, injuries from violence, and falls, according to the NIAA. It also increases your risk of head injury in the form of concussions.

7. Higher Incidence of Digestive Disease

Heavy drinking can lead to stomach inflammation—and that causes acid reflux and heartburn, and in some cases, even long-term esophageal issues. In your gut, alcohol can damage the lining and disrupt your microbiome, causing an imbalance in favor of the bad bacteria. Moderate and heavy drinking both increase the risk of colon cancer, compared to no alcohol consumption.

8. Alcohol Use Disorder

Alcohol use disorder (also called alcohol dependence, addiction, or alcoholism) increases your risk of every health issue mentioned above. Imagine slowly poisoning a plant with small amounts of a toxic liquid substance. That's akin to what chronic alcohol abuse does to your body. It slowly

erodes multiple areas of health and takes years off your life. The [CDC](#) reports that more than 140,000 people die from excessive alcohol use in the U.S. each year, and those people's lives were shortened by an average of 26 years!

9. Kills Your Liver Function

Any time you drink more alcohol than your liver can process, it causes problems. If you consume a large amount of alcohol, even for just a few days, it can lead to a build-up of fats in the liver, which is called alcoholic fatty liver disease. While it is usually heavy drinking that harms the liver, moderate drinking can cause some degree of fatty liver.

Long-term alcohol abuse seen in alcoholics may cause swelling and inflammation (hepatitis) of the liver. Over time, this can lead to permanent damage and scarring, which is called cirrhosis of the liver—known as the final phase of alcoholic liver disease. Roughly 43% of liver disease deaths in the U.S. are related to alcohol consumption. [READ](#)

For Immediate Action

- Share this Alert with your faith community.
- Forward to 10 others.

Click here to donate to Illinois Churches in Action (tax deductible)



www.ilcaaap.org
1132 W Jefferson
Springfield, IL 60702

STAY CONNECTED

