

# WHAT IS alcohol misuse?

Alcohol misuse, which includes binge drinking and heavy drinking, increases your risk of harmful consequences, including AUD. The more drinks on any day and the more alcohol misuse over time, the greater the risk. NIAAA defines binge drinking as a pattern of drinking alcohol that brings blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent—or 0.08 grams of alcohol per deciliter—or higher. For a typical adult, this pattern corresponds to consuming 5 or more drinks (male), or 4 or more drinks (female), in about 2 hours.

It's up to you as to whether and when to change your drinking. You don't have to wait until you develop alcohol use disorder (AUD) or other alcohol-related problems to evaluate your relationship with alcohol.

If you think you need help:

**Behavioral Health  
Treatment Services  
Locator**

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## **our mission:**

To foster community changes to reduce substance abuse and the consequences of substance abuse through community collaborative efforts. Support and advocate for a Safe and Drug-Free Community.

## **our vision:**

To provide a culturally competent, behavioral health and wellness approach to substance abuse prevention in Monroe County.



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Florida, and the State of Florida,  
Department of Children and Families**

# LET'S TALK ABOUT alcohol misuse

# Health problems.

Drinking is associated with a number of health problems and can make certain chronic health problems worse. Half of liver disease deaths in the United States are caused by alcohol, and alcohol-associated liver disease is increasing, particularly among women and young people. Research has shown an important association between alcohol consumption and breast cancer—for each 10 grams of alcohol consumed (less than 1 standard drink) on an average daily basis, a woman's chance of developing postmenopausal breast cancer increases by around 9 percent. Individuals who carry certain gene variants associated with alcohol-related flushing (e.g., the ALDH2-2 variant) are at an elevated risk of esophageal cancer from alcohol consumption. Research has also shown that alcohol misuse increases the risk of liver disease, cardiovascular diseases, depression, and stomach bleeding, as well as cancers of the oral cavity, esophagus, larynx, pharynx, liver, colon, and rectum. People who misuse alcohol may also have problems managing conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, pain, and sleep disorders. And people who misuse alcohol are more likely to engage in unsafe sexual behavior, putting themselves and others at risk for sexually transmitted infections and unintentional pregnancies.

**National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism**

RETHINKINGDRINKING.NIAA.NIH.GOV

# What are the symptoms of alcohol use disorder (AUD)?

Having even a couple of symptoms—which you might not see as trouble signs—can signal a drinking problem. It helps to know the signs so you can make a change early. In the past year, have you:

- Had times when you ended up drinking more, or longer, than you intended?
- More than once wanted to cut down or stop drinking, or tried to, but couldn't?
- Spent a lot of time drinking, being sick from drinking, getting over other aftereffects?
- Wanted a drink so badly you couldn't think of anything else?
- Found that drinking—or being sick from drinking—often interfered with taking care of your home or family? Or caused job troubles? Or school problems?
- Continued to drink even though it was causing trouble with your family or friends?
- Given up or cut back on activities that were important or interesting to you, or gave you pleasure, in order to drink?
- Continued to drink even though it was making you feel depressed or anxious or adding to another health problem? Or after having had an alcohol-related memory blackout?
- Had to drink much more than you once did to get the effect you want? Or found that your usual number of drinks had much less effect than before?
- Found that when the effects of alcohol were wearing off, you had withdrawal symptoms, such as trouble sleeping, shakiness, restlessness, nausea, sweating, a racing heart, dysphoria (feeling uneasy or unhappy), malaise (general sense of being unwell), feeling low, or a seizure? Or sensed things that were not there?

If you don't have any symptoms, then staying within the limits provided in the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans could reduce your chances of having problems in the future. If you do have any symptoms, then alcohol may already be a cause for concern. The more symptoms you have, the more urgent the need for change. A healthcare professional can look at the number, pattern, and severity of symptoms to see whether AUD is present and help you decide the best course of action.