

Your Health Matters

JUST ONE DRINK?

Today more than 7 million children woke up in a home where at least one parent is dependent on or has abused alcohol. Anyone can become addicted to alcohol. It doesn't discriminate by income, education, ethnicity, gender or geography. Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the US. In fact, one in every 12 people (17.6 million) is dependent on or abuses alcohol, and millions more engage in risky drinking behaviors. If you abuse alcohol, or know someone who does – you are not alone!

Alcohol abuse can affect every part of a person's life.

- It can cause them to lose jobs and suffer financial difficulty.
- It can damage friendships and family relationships, even leading to physical abuse and violence against the people they love.
- Alcohol abuse can lead to unintentional injuries like car accidents, falls, drowning, and gun injuries.
- It can cause depression, anxiety or suicidal thoughts.
- Abusing alcohol over time can lead to health problems and chronic diseases. It can increase the risk for dementia, stroke, heart problems, many kinds of cancer, liver disease, gastrointestinal problems and alcoholism.
- Alcoholism can shorten your life by 30 years, or more.

Alcoholism is not so much about how much alcohol a person drinks, what kind of alcohol they drink, or even how long they have been drinking. Alcoholism is about a person's uncontrollable need for alcohol. It's about a powerful craving for alcohol that can't be quenched with just a little willpower.

Some people can recover from alcoholism on their own, but most people need professional help. The good news – with treatment and support, many people can stop drinking and take back their lives.

The Montgomery County Health Department offers counselling services for people suffering from alcoholism, and for their family members.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Do you drink heavily when you are disappointed, under pressure or arguing with someone?
- Do you avoid family or friends while you drink, or do you sneak drinks when no one is looking?
- Do you sometimes feel uncomfortable if alcohol is not available or feel guilty about drinking?
- Are you more in a hurry to get your first drink of the day than you used to be?
- Do you ever have the shakes in the morning and find that it helps to have a little drink?
- Do you feel depressed or anxious before, during or after periods of heavy drinking?

To learn more about how public health impacts you, call 573-564-2495 or visit us online at www.montgomerycountyhealth.org or on Facebook or Twitter @healthymoco. ■

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