

Is It Social Drinking or Alcohol Abuse?



It is a setting many people are familiar with ... friends, colleagues and family members getting together on a Friday night to unwind from a long week.

Drinks are ordered here and there and everything is just fine.

Or is it?

According to a survey conducted by the **National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)** Laboratory of Epidemiology and Biometry, 43.1 percent of men and 28.8 percent of women 18 and older surveyed were binge drinkers in the past year, meaning they consumed four (women) or five (men) or more drinks within two hours at least once.

"Many of these drinkers may be unaware that their drinking habits are putting them at risk for alcohol-related problems. Some may already have symptoms of an alcohol-use disorder without recognizing them. Others may know that their drinking is causing problems, but don't know where to turn for help in cutting back or quitting," said the NIAAA.

For healthy adults, men drinking more than four drinks on any day or 14 per week and women drinking more than three drinks on any day or seven per week are considered at-risk or heavy drinking.

In the U.S., a standard drink is any drink that contains about 0.6 fluid ounces or 14 grams of pure alcohol, following standards set by the Federal Alcohol Administration Act, which regulates the labeling and advertising of wine (containing at least 7 percent alcohol by volume), distilled spirits and malt beverages.

There is a distinction between alcohol abuse and alcoholism. Unlike alcoholics, alcohol abusers have some ability to set limits on their drinking. For example they binge drink on the weekend but not during the work week.

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Despite the differences between the two, alcohol abuse can be just as destructive as alcoholism. Some common signs of alcohol abuse, past the number of drinks consumed, are repeatedly missing deadlines or work because of a hangover; having run-ins with the law while drinking; making poor choices while drinking, like drinking and driving or mixing alcohol with prescription drinks; ruining relationships because of alcohol or drinking as a form of stress-release.

Denial is one of the biggest obstacles for those who abuse alcohol, but for parents that denial can turn into fear or anger; however, underage drinking is something all parents should be aware of.

According to the NIAAA, by age 15, more than 50 percent of teens have had at least one drink and by 18, more than 70 percent of teens have had at least one drink. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Alcohol is the most commonly used and abused drug among youth in the United States, more than tobacco and illicit drugs, and is responsible for more than 4,300 annual deaths among underage youth. Although drinking by persons under the age of 21 is illegal, people aged 12 to 20 years drink 11 percent of all alcohol consumed in the United States. More than 90 percent of this alcohol is consumed in the form of binge drinks."

To Learn **More about Alcohol**, [please click here](#).