

Women Tend to Seek Help for Alcohol Abuse Sooner Than Men



Women with drinking problems seek treatment an average of four to five years earlier than men with drinking problems, a new study reveals.

Researchers collected information from 274 men and 257 women in substance abuse treatment facilities and found that women sought treatment after about 10 years of having a drinking problem, compared with about 15 years for men.

In addition, the investigators found that women start drinking regularly around the same age as men -- average age was 19 for women and 18 for men -- and that self-reported drinking problems begin in the early 20s for both women and men.

The findings were released online earlier this month in advance of publication in an upcoming print issue of the journal *Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research*.

"Historically, alcoholism has been considered a 'male disease' due to its markedly higher prevalence among men," study corresponding author Ben Lewis, a postdoctoral associate in the psychiatry department at the University of Florida, said in a journal news release. "More recently it has been recognized that while men may have a higher prevalence, women may be uniquely vulnerable to negative consequences of chronic drinking."

While the study did not determine why women seek treatment sooner than men, the fact that they do so is important information for doctors and other health care providers, said Rosemary Fama, senior research scientist and senior research neuropsychologist at Stanford University School of Medicine and SRI International, in the news release. She was not involved in the study.

Fama suggested that women may attach less social stigma to drinking problems than men and may be more willing to admit that they have a drinking problem and need professional help to deal with it.

"The bottom line is that hopefully these results will raise awareness concerning the restricted time

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window between alcohol problems and the development of sufficient negative consequences to prompt seeking treatment among women," study author Lewis said.

"These findings emphasize the need for greater attention to women's issues, determining sex-specific risk factors, as well as identifying subgroups most likely to require treatment. Additionally, there must be a greater awareness of the importance of intervening when alcohol problems are first experienced. If we are able to develop appropriate interventions, we may mitigate the need for inpatient treatment for some of these women," he explained.

Helping a loved one struggling with alcoholism or drug dependence can be heartbreakingly painful, but with help, it can be remarkably rewarding. At times, it can seem so overwhelming that it would be easier to ignore it, pretend that nothing is wrong and hope it just goes away. But in the long run, denying it or minimizing it, will be more damaging to you, other family members, and the person you are concerned about. **Don't Wait, Now Is The Time.** [Click here](#) to learn how to help someone with alcohol or drug issues.