Marty Mann, NCADD's founder, was the first woman to recover from alcoholism in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). As a result, NCADD has always been dedicated to increasing public awareness and support for women struggling with addiction to alcohol and drugs. Alcoholism does not discriminate between men and women.

A woman's pattern of drinking is most likely due to one or a combination of factors:

- Having parents, siblings, and/or blood relatives with alcohol problems
- Having a partner, lover and/or spouse who drinks heavily
- Having the ability to "hold liquor" (tolerance for) more than others
- Having a history of anxiety and/or depression
- Having a history of childhood physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse

Women who develop alcoholism have death rates nearly 75% higher, than those of male alcoholics. **Death from suicide, alcohol-related accidents, heart disease, stroke, cirrhosis of liver, etc. occur more frequently in women vs. men.**

Alcohol Effects: Women vs. Men

When you compare women and men of the same height, weight and build, men tend to have more muscle and less fat than women. Because muscle has more water than fat, alcohol is more diluted in a man than in a woman. Therefore, the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) resulting will be higher in a woman than in a man, and the woman will feel the effects of the alcohol sooner than the man.

A common theme in women's lives is **stress.** It is unclear just how stress leads to problem drinking but research tends to support the link between coping with stress and problem drinking. For many women, alcohol becomes a means of coping with stresses like: living alone and dealing with loneliness; going through a separation and/or divorce; living unmarried with a partner; living with a husband who drinks too much; being in an abusive relationship; dealing with issues of parenting; experiencing the deep pain of losing a child.

But, most importantly, women can find help with their drinking!

Age and ethnicity are important to look at with respect to women and drinking. Young women in their 20's and 30's are more likely to drink than older women. However, there is an increasing number of women in their later years, 65 and older, who drink due to loneliness and depression. Heavy drinking among White (Caucasian) women is most common in the younger years; African American (Black) women tend to have more problems with drinking in their middle years; Hispanic (Latina) women drink along the lines common to their respective culture.

FACT: Drinking and driving is one of the leading causes of death for women.

Some key indicators of a woman who may be in trouble with alcohol:

- Missing work or skipping child care responsibilities
- Drinking in dangerous situations, such as before or while driving a motor vehicle,

transporting kids, etc.
- Being arrested for driving under the influence (DUI/DWI)
- Hurting someone while drinking: emotional/physical abuse
- Continuing to drink even with ongoing alcohol-related tensions with family, friends, workplace, partners
- Craving alcohol gets stronger over time and the compulsion to drink increases over time
- Losing control and just can't stop drinking once begun
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms after they stop drinking: nausea; sweating; shakiness, anxiety
- Developing a higher tolerance and to get a "high" from drinking they must consume more alcohol

Back in 1944, NCADD's Founder, Marty Mann led pioneering efforts to start a discussion within the medical and scientific community about the genetic make-up of men and women and alcohol's damaging effects. Fortunately, as a result, more women are living lives in long-term recovery than ever before!

For additional information: NCADD Fact Sheet: Use of Alcohol and Other Drugs Among Women and NCADD Fact Sheet: Alcohol and Other Drug-Related Birth Defects.

If you are concerned about your own use of alcohol or drugs, Get Help. If you are concerned about a member of your family or friend, For Family or Friends.

Or Find an Affiliate near you.

FOR WOMEN WHO ARE HAVING A PROBLEM WITH ALCOHOL….

THERE IS HOPE. THERE IS HELP. THERE IS HEALING.