"Most nights when Anthony Klecker, a former U.S. marine, finally slept, he found himself back on the battlefields of Iraq. He would awake in a panic and struggle futilely to return to sleep. Days were scarcely better. Car alarms shattered his nerves. Flashbacks came unexpectedly, at the whiff of cleaning chemicals. Bar fights seemed unavoidable; he nearly attacked a man for not washing his hands in the bathroom. **Desperate for sleep and relief, Klecker, 30, drank heavily." -** From ***"After the Battle, Fighting the Bottle at Home"*** by Lizette Alvarez.

Alcohol use among active military and veterans is a major health issue in America

Throughout our military history, holding one's liquor has been akin to being a "real soldier"…on par with knowing how to handle one's weapon. Heavy drinking, glamorized in the culture of those serving in uniform, is common. After active duty, many veterans who served our country with honor abuse alcohol – for many reasons - and often because of PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) associated with their experience during military conflicts on the battlefield.

To "really drink" wasto be a man. In more recent times, **more women** have served in all four branches of military – Army – Navy - Air Force – Marines Corps and many use alcohol like their male counterparts but studies show that **women veterans tend to abuse prescription drugs** more frequently than alcohol according to the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality.

FACT: 1 in 8 Troops: One in eight troops returning from Iraq and Afghanistan from 2006 to 2008 were referred for counseling for alcohol problems after their post-deployment health assessments, according to data from the Armed Forces Health Surveillance Center.

The NHSDA (National Household Survey on Drug Abuse), reported the following alcohol use among the nearly 30 million veterans aged 18 and older living in the United States:

- **ALCOHOL USE:** Males Veterans 56% vs. Female Veterans 41%
- **BINGE DRINKING:** Male Veterans 23% vs. Female Veterans 14%
- **HEAVY DRINKING:** Male Veterans 7% vs. Female Veterans 2%

Male veterans are more likely than female veterans to report alcohol use, binge drinking and heavy

alcohol use. But the percentages are still alarming regardless of gender – both male and female veterans have problems with alcohol.

One telling fact about the seriousness of alcohol abuse in the military is this: The Army's substance abuse budget in 2004 = $38 million; in 2008 = $51 million. When Ms. Alvarez wrote an for The New York Times, she quoted Lt. Col. George Wright…. "Our branch of the military has deployed a three-pronged attack against the misuse of alcohol and other substances…the Army takes alcohol and drug abuse very seriously and has tried for decades to deglamorize its use…with the urgency of this war (Iraq and Afghanistan), we continue to tackle the problem with **education, prevention, and treatment**."

Another telling fact is this: In 2007, a Freedom of Information Act request had forced the US government to disclose that more than 33% of troops who were convicted of criminal acts in Afghanistan and Iraq had committed offenses while under the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

As a result more active and veterans are seeking help than ever before: According to the Army, in 2009, the number of soldiers enrolled in treatment after being diagnosed with alcohol problems, increased by 56% since 2003, when the Iraq war started.

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.