Alcohol Awareness Facts

- An alcohol use disorders (AUD) is defined as alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence, and arises from drinking too much, too fast and/or too often.
- Alcohol abuse is defined as a recurring pattern of high-risk drinking that creates problems for the drinker, for others, or for society. Adverse consequences can also arise from a single instance of hazardous alcohol use.
- Alcohol dependence, typically considered to be synonymous with alcoholism (alcohol addiction), is a complex disease characterized by persistent and intense alcohol-seeking, which results in a loss of control over drinking, a preoccupation with drinking, compulsion to drink or inability to stop, and the development of tolerance and dependence.
- Alcohol is the #1 drug problem in America.
- Alcohol also contributes significantly to mortality from a wide-range of acute and chronic injuries and diseases. Each year more than 100,000 Americans die of alcohol-related causes. This makes excessive alcohol use the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death for the nation.
- 40 percent of all traffic fatalities are alcohol related.
- Between 48 percent and 64 percent of people who die in fires have blood alcohol levels indicating intoxication.
- Alcohol has been involved in violence caused by 86 percent of homicide offenders, 37 percent of assault offenders, 60 percent of sexual offenders, 57 percent of men and 27 percent of women involved in marital violence, and 13 percent of child abusers.
- Based on victim reports, each year 183,000 (37 percent) rapes and sexual assaults involve alcohol use by the offender, as do just over 197,000 (15 percent) robberies, about 661,000 (27 percent) aggravated assaults, and nearly 1.7 million (25 percent) simple assaults.
- Studies of suicide victims in the general population show that about 20 percent of such suicide victims are alcohol dependent.
- Excessive alcohol use is responsible for 2.3 million years of potential life lost (YPLL) annually, or an average of about 30 years of potential life lost for each death.
- In 2005, there were more than 1.6 million hospitalizations and more than 4 million emergency room visits for alcohol-related conditions.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), excessive alcohol consumption is the #3 cause of preventable death in the United States.
- In the United States, 18 million Americans (8.5 percent of the population age 18 and older) suffer from alcohol use disorders. Only 7.1 percent of these individuals received any treatment for their AUD in the past year.
In addition to the adverse health effects that result directly from excessive alcohol consumption, other medical conditions often co-occur among individuals with excessive alcohol consumption. Alcohol abuse and dependence commonly occur in people who abuse other drugs, and in people with mood, anxiety, and personality disorders.

An estimated 90 percent of cocaine addicts have alcohol problems.

As many as 60 percent of patients at community mental health centers have alcohol and other drug abuse disorders.

The high co-occurrence of alcohol and tobacco dependence poses special problems. An estimated 50 percent to 90 percent of alcohol dependent individuals are smokers who, in general, smoke heavily, become more addicted to nicotine and are less successful at quitting smoking than other smokers. This puts them at a much higher risk for certain cancers and cardiovascular diseases that develop more readily in the presence of both alcohol and nicotine.

Injuries are the leading cause of death in the U.S. from ages 1-44, and alcohol is the leading contributor to those injury deaths.

Many people who die from alcohol attributable injury deaths are persons other than the drinker. For example, 40 percent of people who die in crashes involving drinking drivers are persons other than the drinking driver e.g. passengers in the same vehicle, passengers in vehicles struck by the drinking driver, bicyclists and pedestrians.

The 2001 survey shows 25 million (one in ten) Americans surveyed reported driving under the influence of alcohol. Among young adults age 18 to 25 years, almost 23 percent drove under the influence of alcohol.

The highest previous year prevalence of alcohol dependence is found among the young adult population (defined as 18-29 years of age), particularly between the ages of 18 through 24.

From its peak in the young adult years, the prevalence of past year alcohol dependence declines with increasing age (adolescence, young adult, midlife defined as 30-59 years of age, and senior), falling below one percent among senior adults (defined as 60 years of age and older).

Alcohol is the drug of choice among youth, used by far more young people than cigarettes, marijuana, or illicit drugs.

As a result, underage drinking is a leading public health problem in this country, as young people create problems for themselves, for people around them, and for society as a whole by drinking too much, too often, at too early an age.

A number of studies have found that early initiation of alcohol use (usually defined as starting to drink at age 13 or younger) is a risk factor for escalation of alcohol use in adolescence, and that both are risk factors for the development of alcohol-related problems in adulthood.

Each day, 7000 children in the U.S. under the age of 16 take their first drink.

More than 500,000 Americans who are dependent on alcohol are between the ages of 9 and 12.

Approximately 62 percent of high school seniors report that they have been drunk; 31 percent say that have had five or more drinks in a row during the last two weeks.

Each year, students spend $5.5 billion on alcohol. That is more than they spend on soft drinks, tea, milk, juice, coffee, or books combined.

Teens whose parents talk to them about the dangers of drinking alcohol are far less likely to drink than those whose parents do not discuss the issue with them.
Children of alcoholics are significantly more likely to initiate drinking during adolescence and to develop alcohol use disorders.

Approximately 20 percent of persons aged 12 or older participated in binge drinking at least once in the 30 days prior. Binge" drinking means having five or more drinks on one occasion.

The highest prevalence of binge and heavy drinking was for young adults aged 18 to 25, with the peak rate occurring at age 21.

More than 35 percent of adults with an alcohol problem developed symptoms such as binge drinking by age 19.

Alcohol abuse statistics tell us that alcohol use by minors is estimated to cost $58 billion per year. This includes traffic crashes, violent crime, burns, drowning, alcohol poisonings, suicide attempts, and treatment.

Data from the National Household Survey indicate that 1.47 million youth ages 12-17 met the criteria for alcohol dependence or alcohol abuse in 2003 (5.9 percent of adolescents in this age group). The same survey showed a major unmet need for alcohol treatment in this group. Only 216,000 (15 percent) received any type of treatment for their alcohol problem.

While for many years, alcoholism treatment approaches relied almost exclusively on behavioral therapy, efforts to develop medications for alcohol use disorders have expanded rapidly in recent years.

Only 0.5 percent of individuals over 60 met criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol dependence during the previous year. Only 1.4 percent met a diagnosis of alcohol abuse. Despite this, only 3.4 percent of those meeting a diagnosis of either alcohol dependence or alcohol abuse had, at some point in their lives, treatment for their alcohol-use disorder.

Alcohol use costs the United States in every conceivable way. Some calculable costs include lost productivity (crime victims and due to illness and premature deaths), property damage, social welfare administration, criminal justice system costs, and medical consequences.

Problems resulting from alcohol use and abuse cost society almost $200 billion every year. The Healthcare costs alone from alcohol-related problems amount to more than $26 billion annually, or $686 per capita for every man, woman, and child living in the US.

More than one-half of American adults have a close family member who has or has had alcoholism.

Approximately one in four children in the U.S. under 18 years old is exposed to alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence in the family.

About 43 percent of US adults or 76 million people have been exposed to alcohol dependence in the family. They grew up with or married a compulsive drinker or had a blood relative who was a problem drinker.

Compulsive drinkers are about two times more likely to be divorced than those not dependent on alcohol.

Approximately 6.6 percent of employees in full time jobs report heavy drinking, defined as drinking five or more drinks per occasion on five or more days in the past 30 days.

The highest percentage of heavy drinkers (12.2 percent) is found among unemployed adults between the age of 26 to 34.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is the leading known cause of mental retardation – and the most preventable of all birth defects.
• Between 20 and 30 percent of male psychiatric admissions are alcohol dependent or have alcohol-related problems.

• In general, unmarried workers (divorced, separated or never married) have about twice the rate of alcoholism or alcohol abuse as married workers.

• Classical alcoholism takes about 15 years to develop, but it can happen much quicker in adolescents and young adults.

• Nearly 20 percent of alcoholics who try to quit drinking on their own without medical management die of alcohol withdrawal delirium.

• Individuals with drinking problems or alcoholism at any time in their lives suffer income reductions ranging from 1.5 percent to 18.7 percent depending on age and sex compared with those with no such diagnosis.

• Non-alcoholic members of alcoholic's families use 10 times as much sick leave as families where alcohol is not a problem. About 80 percent of these family members report their ability to perform work is impaired as a result of living with an alcohol abuser.

• Based on the 2002 and 2003 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in Florida it was estimated that the total number of individuals with an alcohol addiction or alcohol abuse problem over a one year period was 959,000.

• An estimated 73,000 of the individuals with an alcohol addiction or alcohol abuse problem in Florida over a one year period were between the ages of 12-17 years old.

• An estimated 266,000 of the individuals with an alcohol addiction or alcohol abuse problem in Florida over a one year period were between the ages of 18-25 years old.

• An estimated 620,000 of the individuals with an alcohol addiction or alcohol abuse problem in Florida over a one year period were 26 or older.

• The estimated number of binge alcohol users over a one month period was 3,040,000.

The above-mentioned statistics have been published by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (2009).