

Drinking

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Alcohol abuse vs. dependency

"The person who is abusing is a person whose drinking is causing them problems repeatedly. However, because they're drinking with problems or drinking and driving, they don't necessarily have the qualities of someone who is alcohol dependent," said Dr. Kirk Brower, executive director of the Chelsea Arbor Treatment Center in Ann Arbor.

A person who is alcohol dependent exhibits the following traits:

- Impaired control over the use of alcohol.
- Physiological tolerance, such as drinking increasing amounts of alcohol and not feeling the effects.

- Symptoms of withdrawal when they stop or cut down on drinking, such as tremor, headache, nausea, sweating, and rapid heartbeat. More complicated symptoms include seizures and hallucinations.

Brower advocates a 30-day abstinence period when assessing someone's alcohol problems. "If you can't go 30 days without a drink, the chances of succeeding in a program like DrinkWise are very low," he said.

Brower also questions whether curtailing drinking is the best solution for moderate drinkers.

"People who are severely alcohol dependent cannot be taught to moderately drink. People who are minimally dependent may benefit from DrinkWise. The argument comes with people who are moderately dependent. For them, abstinence is the preferred, the best way," he said.

Seeking help

Susan Arnold, a behavioral health therapist at Maple Grove Treatment Center in West Bloomfield, said alcohol problems are evenly divided between men and women. However, women don't seek help as readily as men.

"Usually it's shame. The family and the workplace protects the female alcoholic. I like to think it's happening less, but it's still happening."

In her practice, Arnold concentrates more on the consequences of drinking than the amount or frequency of consumption. When a person's drinking interferes with family dynamics, that's a sign of alcohol abuse, she said. Her assessment of patients includes questions of family confrontation - "Has anyone in your family confronted you about your drinking?"

A high tolerance for alcohol is an indicator of alcoholism, she added. "Those folks have an ability not to look impaired, but over time their bodies won't be able to tolerate alcohol."

Parties present a problem to both men and women seeking to limit their alcohol intake or abstain. The party environment is ripe with "triggers," those signals that create a yearning for a drink - smelling alcohol, easy access to a bar or punch bowl, watching others drink and needing to "fit in."

"To understand that parties are going to threaten your sobriety, you might choose not to go," said Arnold.

Her suggestions include arriv-

ing late and leaving early, going with a friend who knows you have a problem, keeping a glass of ginger ale in hand and realizing that alcohol is "just another excuse for more parties."

Contact numbers: Teresa Herzog Mourad, DrinkWise, (800) 222-5146, ext. 268; Dr. Kirk Brower, Chelsea Arbor Treatment Center, (734) 830-0201, ext. 10; Susan Arnold, Maplegrove Center, (248) 661-6515.

MEDICAL BRIEFS

Flu shots

Oakwood Healthcare System has scheduled some special clinics over the holidays to make sure everyone who wants a flu shot can get one.

Oakwood has an ample supply of flu vaccine. The elderly and those with respiratory or immune system problems should be vaccinated, as should be healthy individuals who want to protect themselves. Influenza disease peaks in January or later, so a flu shot given in late December or early January can offer protection.

Flu shots will be available:

- 9-11 a.m. and 1-4 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 26 and Thursday, Dec. 27, Medical Education Associates, 18181 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn, (313) 593-6810.

- 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday, Dec. 28, Oakwood Out-Patient Pharmacy, Oakwood Hospital & Medical Center Dearborn (Atrium Lobby), 18101 Oakwood Blvd., Dearborn, (313) 593-4200.

- 9-11 a.m. Wednesday, Jan. 9, 2002 OHC Westland, 2001 S. Merriman, Westland, (734) 467-1000.

Oakwood will be providing flu shots through January. Check dates and times of future clinics by calling (800) 543-WELL or visit www.oakwood.org. Flu

shots cost \$15 and are a covered Medicare benefit for Part B recipients.

Help for seniors

If you're an older adult who needs assistance around the house but can't hire full-time help, you can find a helping hand through Beaumont Hospital in Royal Oak.

"Helping Hands," a non-profit program managed by Beaumont's Department of Older Adult Services, provides companionship and personal assistance to independent-living and home-bound senior citizens in the community.

Services provided by Helping Hands include assistance with bathing, shopping, meal preparation, light housekeeping and transportation. Helping Hands workers do not provide medical care or replace maid services. Helping Hands services are provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Minimum service provided is four hour per week for at least four week duration, and clients are billed on an hourly basis.

For more information, call (248) 551-0776 between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

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Host

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pose greater risks for guests to over-consume. No matter what the menu consist of, there should always be a plentiful food supply that is available through the duration of the party.

- Plenty of alcohol-free beverages should be available for guests who choose not to drink alcoholic beverages. People who should avoid alcohol include pregnant or breast-feeding women, persons on medication, and persons with known diseases that result in reactions when alcohol is consumed.

Being a responsible host means you must set the limits on drinking. The amount of alcohol consumed and a person's weight and general health all contribute to the effect alcohol has on each person.

Here are some tips:

- Make sure you have non-alcoholic beverages available.
- Designate someone trustworthy to act as bartender or hire a professional bartender.
- Do not let guests serve themselves.
- Do not serve alcohol to at-risk guests.

Source: Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board