

NIAAA

Understanding Alcohol's Impact on Health

Alcohol and American Society: A Complex Relationship

Alcohol has long been an integral part of American culture, tightly woven into the fabric of society. Most adults who drink alcohol drink moderately and responsibly without complications, and some can even derive modest health benefits.



At the same time, alcohol-related problems among adults and adolescents—which result from drinking too much, too fast, or too often—are among the most significant public health issues in the United States and internationally. For example,

- Each year in the United States, more than 88,000 people¹ die from alcohol-related causes, making it the third leading preventable cause of death in our country. The first is tobacco, and the second is poor diet and physical inactivity.²
- Alcohol misuse costs the United States about \$249 billion per year.³
- In the United States, approximately 15 million people had alcohol use disorder in 2016.⁴
- More than 10 percent of U.S. children live with a parent with alcohol problems, according to a 2017 study.⁵
- Globally, alcohol misuse is the seventh leading risk factor for premature death and disability.⁶

NIAAA's Valuable Contribution

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), a component of the National Institutes of Health, is the lead Federal agency for research on alcohol and health. NIAAA is the largest funder of alcohol research in the world, with an integrated and multidisciplinary program that includes genetics, basic and clinical research, neuroscience, epidemiology, prevention, and treatment.

continued



NIAAA's research focuses on health topics that touch the lives of almost every family and community across America:

- Why some people develop alcohol use disorder
- How the consequences of harmful drinking affect individuals and society
- How underage drinking impacts neurobiological development in adolescents
- How we can improve prevention, treatment, and recovery programs
- How and why some individuals derive modest health benefits from drinking alcohol



Importantly, the Institute's demanding scientific approach generates results that are unbiased, methodologically sound, and trustworthy—making NIAAA the definitive source for science-based information about alcohol and health for individuals, communities, policymakers, and medical practitioners.

In the alcohol prevention and treatment field, there are more life-saving tools available today than ever before, thanks largely to the determined and uncompromising efforts of the talented researchers supported by NIAAA.

Looking forward, NIAAA will continue to work toward a greater understanding of alcohol's effects on health and society—an understanding that will help more people live long and healthy lives.

For more information, please visit: <https://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

- ¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Alcohol and Public Health: Alcohol-Related Disease Impact (ARDI). Average for United States 2006-2010 Alcohol-Attributable Deaths Due to Excessive Alcohol Use*. Available at: <https://go.usa.gov/xKBjQ>. Accessed January 4, 2018.
- ² Mokdad, A.H.; Marks, J.S.; Stroup, D.F.; and Gerberding, J.L. Actual causes of death in the United States, 2000. [Published erratum in: *JAMA* 293(3):298, 2005] *JAMA* 291(10):1238–1245, 2004. PMID: 15010446
- ³ Sacks, J.J.; Gonzales, K.R.; Bouchery, E.E.; Tomedi, L.E.; and Brewer, R.D. 2010 National and state costs of excessive alcohol consumption. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 49(5):e73–e79, 2015. PMID: 26477807
- ⁴ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). *Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Detailed Tables*. Table 5.5A—Alcohol Use Disorder in Past Year among Persons Aged 12 or Older, by Age Group and Demographic Characteristics: Numbers in Thousands, 2015 and 2016. Rockville, MD: SAMHSA. Available at: <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/NSDUH-DefTabs-2016/NSDUH-DefTabs-2016.htm#tab5-5A>. Accessed January 4, 2018.
- ⁵ Lipari, R.N.; and Van Horn, S.L. Children living with parents who have a substance use disorder. *The CBHSQ Report: August 24, 2017*. Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, SAMHSA. Available at: https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/report_3223/ShortReport-3223.html. Accessed January 4, 2018.
- ⁶ GBD 2016 Risk Factors Collaborators. Global, regional, and national comparative risk assessment of 84 behavioural, environmental and occupational, and metabolic risks or clusters of risks, 1990–2016: A systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2016. *Lancet* 390(10100):1345–1422, 2017. PMID: 28919119

Updated January 2018

