



Alcohol and drug use

Know when to say “no”



Do you know someone who has struggled with drugs or alcohol? In fact, more than 20 million people over the age of 12 in the U.S. have substance use disorder (SUD). Including the more than 14 million people who have alcohol use disorder (AUD).¹ Substance use is all around us, so it's important to understand how using a substance can affect your life and to know the signs of misuse to look for.

Alcohol use

Light or moderate drinking can potentially be good for your heart health and even help lower the risk of stroke or diabetes.² But heavy drinking could lead to AUD and increase your risk for things like heart or liver disease, high blood pressure, stroke, depression, cancer, accidental injuries, death, or birth defects.²

You can check for early symptoms of alcohol misuse by asking the following questions.³

- Have you continued to drink even if it causes problems with family or friends?
- Have you given up on activities that were important to you to make time for drinking?
- Have you tried to stop drinking more than once before but couldn't?
- Do you have times when you drink more or longer than you were expecting?

If the answer to any of these questions is “yes”, make an appointment right away to talk to your doctor about helpful changes you can make. Your annual physical is a good opportunity to talk to your doctor, too. Plus, it's covered at 100% by most plans.

What's a standard drink?²

Moderate drinking is defined as no more than one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. But when it comes to alcohol, one drink might be less than you think. These three different drinks contain the same amount of alcohol even though they're different sizes.

- **Beer:** 12 fluid ounces
- **Wine:** 5 fluid ounces
- **Distilled spirits:** 80 proof: 1.5 fluid ounces



Sources

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration website: *2018 NSDUH Annual National Report* (August 20, 2019): [samhsa.gov/data/report/2018-nsduh-annual-national-report](https://www.samhsa.gov/data/report/2018-nsduh-annual-national-report).

² Mayo Clinic website: *Alcohol use: Weighing risks and benefits* (October 2019): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).

³ Rethinking Drinking website: *What are symptoms of alcohol use disorder?* (accessed December 2019): [rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/How-much-is-too-much/Whats-the-harm/What-Are-Symptoms-Of-Alcohol-Use-Disorder.aspx](https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/How-much-is-too-much/Whats-the-harm/What-Are-Symptoms-Of-Alcohol-Use-Disorder.aspx).

⁴ National Institute on Drug Abuse website: *Health Consequences of Drug Misuse* (accessed December 2019): [drugabuse.gov/related-topics/health-consequences-drug-misuse](https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/health-consequences-drug-misuse).

⁵ Gateway Foundation website: *Effects of Drug Abuse and Addiction* (accessed April 2019): [gatewayfoundation.org](https://www.gatewayfoundation.org).

⁶ Mayo Clinic website: *Drug addiction* (substance use disorder) (accessed December 2019): [mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org).

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Drug use

Substance use includes the use of drugs like marijuana, heroin, cocaine and crack, methamphetamine (meth), hallucinogens, inhalants and prescription drugs.¹ Along with the risk of addiction, using these substances can impact all parts of your life.

Here are some of the issues substance use can cause.^{4,5}

Health issues

Stroke
Heart problems
HIV/AIDS
Cancer

Behavior issues

Paranoia
Aggressiveness
Hallucinations
Loss of self-control

Social issues

Violence
Crime
Homelessness
Unemployment or missed work

Signs of addiction

Addiction is a disease. And things like your mental health, family history and the age you start using drugs are all risk factors for developing addiction when using substances. Some of the signs of addiction to drugs or alcohol include:⁶

- Feeling the need to use it regularly
- Overspending or stealing money to get it
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms when you try to stop
- Needing more drugs or alcohol over time to get the same effect

Visit [anthem.com/blog](https://www.anthem.com/blog) for more on how to get healthy and stay healthy.

Resources for you

If you or a covered dependent are struggling with drugs or alcohol make an appointment to talk to your doctor as soon as possible. You may also have access to programs that can help, through your health plan. Check your benefits details by logging in to [anthem.com](https://www.anthem.com).

You can also visit the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services website at [samhsa.gov/find-help](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help) for more information on drug and alcohol use.

