

## **Sobering Facts – About Alcohol**

- Alcohol is a factor in about four out of every ten deaths from car crashes, drownings, burns, falls, and other injuries. Because it is a depressant, it slows down the central nervous system, causing delayed reactions, impaired motor skills, slurred speech, and vision and hearing impairment.
- Alcohol goes into the blood-stream quickly, often within five to ten minutes of drinking. After just one drink, a person has impaired functioning.
- Students who drink alcohol tend to do poorly in school. They lack concentration, have memory problems, and feel tired because alcohol affects sleep patterns.
- Depression and suicide are more common among people who drink. Many people act out of character after consuming alcohol, crying easily and getting angry or violent.
- Alcohol has been linked to weight gain and high blood pressure. It also damages the liver, as well as the stomach, kidneys, heart and brain.
- Alcohol poisoning can occur if a person drinks too much. Violent vomiting is usually the first symptom. Other effects include extreme sleepiness, unconsciousness, difficulty breathing, dangerously low blood sugar and blood pressure, seizures, and even death.
- Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can cause physical and mental birth defects. Each year up to 40,000 babies are born with some degree of alcohol-related damage. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders include mental retardation; learning, emotional, and behavioural problems; and defects involving the heart, face and other organs. No level of alcohol use during pregnancy has been proven safe. Moderate—or even light—drinking may harm the fetus, so the U.S Surgeon General urges women to abstain from alcohol while pregnant, while trying to get pregnant, and while nursing.
- Alcoholism, or alcohol dependence, happens when a person becomes addicted to alcohol. They crave it, feel that they can't live without it, and have to drink more in order to get the same effect as before. The younger a person is when they start drinking, the higher their chances of developing alcoholism. Almost half of people who began drinking before age 15 become alcoholics at some point of their lives.
- Alcoholism is a disease that can destroy a person's life—and the lives of those around them. Homes with heavy drinkers have more arguments and higher rates of divorce and child abuse. Alcoholics Anonymous is a support group for people struggling with alcoholism, and you can find a chapter in most phone books.

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