

## ***HERE ARE THE STRAIGHT FACTS...***

### ***About Alcohol.\****

*Alcohol abuse* is a pattern of problem drinking that results in health consequences, social, problems, or both. However, *alcohol dependence*, or *alcoholism*, refers to a disease that is characterized by abnormal alcohol-seeking behavior that leads to impaired control over drinking.

*Short-term effects of alcohol use include:*

*distorted vision, hearing, and coordination  
altered perceptions and emotions  
impaired judgment  
bad breath; hangovers*

*Long-term effects of heavy alcohol use include:*

*loss of appetite  
vitamin deficiencies  
stomach ailments  
skin problems  
sexual impotence  
liver damage  
heart and central nervous system damage  
memory loss*

### ***How Do I Know if I, or Someone Close, Has a Drinking Problem?***

**Here are some quick clues:**

*Inability to control drinking--it seems that regardless of what you decide beforehand, you frequently wind up drunk*

*Using alcohol to escape problems*

*A change in personality--turning from Dr. Jekyll to Mr. Hyde*

*A high tolerance level--drinking just about everybody under the table*

*Blackouts--sometimes not remembering what happened while drinking*

*Problems at work or in school as a result of drinking*

*Concern shown by family and friends about drinking*

If you have a drinking problem, or if you suspect you have a drinking problem, there are many others out there like you, and there is help available. Talk to a school counselor, a friend, or a parent.

\* From "Straight Facts About Drugs and Alcohol." [www.health.org/govpubs/rpo884](http://www.health.org/govpubs/rpo884). October 2001