

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. October 2001