

Worried About a Friend or Family Member?

Use this questionnaire to review the drinking behavior of someone close to you. Take the relevant information and use it as a guide should you choose to speak with a health professional about your concerns.

How Can I Recognize Signs of an Alcohol Problem in Someone I Care About?

Please check all that apply:

- Drinking to calm nerves, forget worries or boost a sad mood
- Guilt about drinking
- Unsuccessful attempts to cut down/stop drinking
- Lying about or hiding drinking habits
- Causing harm to oneself or someone else as a result of drinking
- Needing to drink increasingly greater amounts in order to achieve desired effect
- Feeling irritable, resentful or unreasonable when not drinking
- Medical, social, family or financial problems caused by drinking
- Spending a great deal of time getting alcohol and drinking alcohol
- Drinking in risky situations such as before driving or before engaging in unwanted/unprotected sex

Source: Adapted from Greenfield, S. Educational Lecture for National Alcohol Screening Day. 1999. Updated by Richard Saitz, MD, MPH

Questionnaire Interpretation

If you checked one or more of the squares above, there's a good chance that alcohol might be negatively affecting your friend or family member. Flip the page to learn what to do next.

If you have a friend who might have a problem with alcohol and you feel you may be able to help him or her on your own, then follow this plan:

- ✓ **Seek out resources on your campus or in your local community and get sound advice.** Go to a school counselor, a campus nurse, or someone else you trust. Self-help groups like AA, as well as mental health clinics, clergy, doctors, and substance abuse counselors are knowledgeable about alcohol problems. If you explain your predicament to a third party, it will help you figure out how to proceed.
- ✓ **Choose a good time to talk with your friend or loved one,** such as shortly after an alcohol-related problem has occurred. Choose a time when he or she is sober, when both of you are calm, and when you can speak privately. The time will never feel “right” to bring up such a tough subject, but beginning your talk when you’re both alert will give you a better chance of being heard.
- ✓ **Be specific and keep it personal.** Tell the friend or family member that you are concerned about his or her drinking and want to be supportive in getting help. Begin the conversation with your friend or loved one by letting him or her know you care, which is why you’re going to be up front. List the negative effects you’ve seen alcohol have on the person, including health problems, poor grades, isolation from family and friends, etc. Your friend won’t be able to ignore the hard evidence.
- ✓ **Let your friend or family member know that risky drinking can lead to more severe alcohol problems.** This can include alcohol dependence (alcoholism), injuries and unwanted/unprotected sex.
- ✓ **Expect denial.** It won’t be easy getting your friend to admit he or she’s got a problem with alcohol. Accepting that you’ve developed a dependency on alcohol can be humiliating. Remind your friend that this dependency is the one personal obstacle that he or she has to overcome, and that there are many great things that make your friend a valuable human being.
- ✓ **Use the resources and follow through.** Ultimately, it must be your friend’s choice to help him- or herself. Once that decision is made, show your support: Prove that you meant it when you said you’d attend A.A. meetings with him, or that you’d opt for going to the movies with her instead of hitting that keg party.

Resources

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism:
301.443.3860, www.niaaa.nih.gov

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: 800.662.HELP, www.samhsa.gov,
www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov

Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters:
U.S.: 888.425.2666, Canada: 613.723.8484
www.al-anon.alateen.org

Alcoholics Anonymous World Services:
212.870.3400, www.alcoholics-anonymous.org



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