

# Alcohol Use and Liver Disease

## Self-Management Plan

- Excessive alcohol use is the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death for the nation.
- Alcohol affects all body systems!

- Learn the risks and health effects of alcohol consumption.

### Green Flags—All Clear



#### If you:

- Do not drink or, if you do, drink in moderation.

### What this means ...

- You are taking steps in taking care of your health.

### Keep up the great work!

### Yellow Flags—Caution



#### If you:

- Drink heavily and are frequently intoxicated.
- Have risky behaviors, e.g., driving after drinking.
- Have a loss of appetite.
- Regularly lose control over your alcohol intake, drink to cope with difficulties, or drink to avoid feeling bad.
- Need to drink to relieve or avoid withdrawal symptoms.
- Black out (have little or no memory of events before passing out).
- Have rapid weight gain or a growing abdomen.

### What this means ...

- You are at an increased risk for accidents and injuries.
- You are at an increased risk for health complications.
- You may benefit from counseling.
- You may benefit from alcohol treatment.

**Talk with your health care provider about your drinking.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Instructions:**

**If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.**

### Red Flags—Stop and Think



#### If you:

- Shake or have tremors in your hands and legs or have a seizure.
- Experience hallucinations.
- Have nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain and/or dehydration.
- Vomit blood or have black stool.
- Have confusion, agitation, sweating, rapid heart rate, and high blood pressure, which indicate delirium tremens (“DTs”).
- Have loss of consciousness or fainting.
- Feel suicidal.

### What this means ...

- You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.
- If possible, notify your health care provider’s office.

**If possible, call your health care provider’s office. You may be instructed to go to urgent care or call 9-1-1.**

**Name:**

**Number:**

**Follow these instructions:**

**If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!**

# Alcohol Fast Facts

- Alcoholism, also known as “alcohol dependence,” is a disease that includes alcohol craving and continued drinking despite repeated alcohol-related problems, such as losing a job or getting into trouble with the law. Approximately 80,000 deaths are attributed to excessive alcohol use each year in the United States.
- **Alcohol affects all body systems.** It acts as a depressant and slows reaction time that leads to impaired judgment and decreased coordination. High intake of alcohol can cause mood swings, behavior changes, and problems with your ability to walk. Other side effects include dilation of blood vessels and increased stomach acid.
- Moderate drinking is defined as up to four alcoholic drinks for men and three for women in any single day.
- Heavy drinkers suffer a variety of alcohol-related problems, including damage to the brain (including strokes), stomach aches, heart disease (high blood pressure, an enlarged heart and/or irregular heartbeat and heart attacks), and elevated cholesterol levels, as well as diseases of the liver and pancreas. They are also 10 times more likely to get cancer than those who drink moderately or not at all. The risk of mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colon, and breast cancers are increased.
- Your liver can only metabolize about one drink per hour. Drinking more than that causes intoxication and impairment.
- Binge drinking is generally defined as the consumption of five or more drinks on one occasion.
- Each year, thousands of people choke on their own vomit while intoxicated.
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency, results from high blood alcohol levels that suppress the central nervous system. This can cause loss of consciousness, low blood pressure and body temperature, coma, respiratory depression, or death.

## What can you do?

- Talk openly to your health care provider. There is help for you if you are interested.
- Avoid mixing alcohol and over-the-counter or prescription medicines.
- Avoid alcohol if you have had a previous hemorrhagic stroke, have heart failure, or if you have been told you have weak heart or an enlarged heart.
- Avoid alcohol if you have liver or pancreatic disease.
- Contact the addiction treatment helpline:

**1-800-610-HOPE (4673)**

Washington Recovery Help Line 24-Hour Help for  
Substance Abuse, Problem Gambling & Mental Health  
866-789-1511 TTY 206-461-3219

## Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail [info@communitylivingconnections.org](mailto:info@communitylivingconnections.org).



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