

# health awareness



A COUNTY HEALTH POOL PUBLICATION

APRIL 2021



## ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. According to the JAMA article, "[Actual Causes of Death in the United States, 2000](#)", approximately 85,000 people die from alcohol-related causes each year. Alcohol abuse is the third leading cause of preventable death in the United States, following tobacco use and poor diet coupled with physical inactivity.

Alcohol use disorder, which includes alcoholism and binge drinking, ranges from moderate to severe based on the number of symptoms. While alcohol use often begins in the teens, alcohol use disorder

tends to develop in the twenties or thirties.

### Risk Factors

While anyone can develop alcohol use disorder, research has revealed that people with certain backgrounds are more at risk. Individuals with a family history of alcohol abuse, past trauma, depression, or other mental health issues, or who have close friends or a partner who abuse alcohol are at higher risk. Starting to drink alcohol at an early age, binge drinking, and steady drinking over a prolonged period also contribute to problematic alcohol use.

According to the Mayo Clinic, alcohol use disorder is a pattern of alcohol use that involves:

- problems controlling drinking
- being preoccupied with alcohol
- continuing to use alcohol even when it causes problems
- having to drink more to get the same effect
- having withdrawal symptoms when ceasing alcohol use

### Symptoms

There are several symptoms of

*(Article is continued on reverse side.)*

an alcohol use disorder, including the following:

- Unable to limit how much alcohol you drink
- Unable to cut down on how much you drink
- Spending a lot of time drinking, getting alcohol, or recovering from drinking
- Failing to meet work or family obligations because of alcohol use
- Continuing to use alcohol despite it causing physical or personal problems
- Limiting social and work activities

- Consuming alcohol in unsafe situations (i.e., driving, swimming)
- Requiring more and more alcohol to get the same effect
- Having withdrawal symptoms (e.g., nausea, sweating, shaking) when not drinking or drinking to avoid these symptoms

### **Treatment**

Excessive alcohol use causes changes to the brain that can make quitting difficult. There are numerous treatment programs, both inpatient and outpatient, to help people

stop abusing alcohol.

People with severe alcohol use disorder may have severe withdrawal symptoms that require hospitalization or a treatment center. While there are no medications to treat alcohol use disorder, some medications can help make drinking less enjoyable or help treat withdrawal symptoms.

If you are concerned about your alcohol use, consult with your doctor to explore treatment options for your specific situation. [CTSI](#)

## Benefits Corner

### IRS Makes PPE to Prevent COVID-19 Tax Deductible

The IRS recently issued Announcement 2021-7 ([www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/a-21-07.pdf](http://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/a-21-07.pdf)) that states that personal protection equipment (PPE), such as face masks, hand sanitizer, and sanitizing wipes, used for the primary purpose of preventing COVID-19 are treated as amounts paid for medical care under §213(d) of the Internal Revenue Code. Costs for these items that are not covered by insurance are tax-deductible for the taxpayer, taxpayer's spouse, or the taxpayer's dependents "provided that the taxpayer's total medical expenses exceed 7.5 percent of adjusted gross income,"

In addition, this also means that PPE for preventing the spread of Covid-19 can be paid for or reimbursed using a Flexible Spending Account (FSA), Archer medical savings account, health reimbursement arrangements (HRAs), or health savings accounts (HSAs). The IRS also extended the deadline to make 2020 prior-year contributions for FSAs, HRAs, and other individually owned tax-advantaged accounts to May 17, 2021.

As always, CTSI staff is here to assist you with your health, dental, vision, or life insurance coverage. You can reach us at 303 861 0507.

