



## **Does someone you know drink too much?**

Are you concerned that a co-worker, friend, or family member is drinking too much? Perhaps their drinking is affecting your relationship with them; their ability to do their job; and if they are recovering from a wound, illness or injury, their recovery and resilience. Consider the following:

### **What is drinking too much?**

Excessive alcohol use includes one or more of the following<sup>1</sup>:

- Heavy drinking, typically defined as two or more drinks per day on average for men and one or more drinks per day on average for women
- Binge drinking, typically defined as five or more drinks on a single occasion for men, and four or more drinks on a single occasion for women
- Underage drinking
- Drinking while pregnant

Drinking may affect their relationships with coworkers, family members or friends. It can impact how someone thinks and feels as well as their memory, brain function, and motor skills. Excessive alcohol use may also put someone recovering from a wound, illness, or injury at increased risk for re-injury and delayed healing.

Below are some tips on cutting back on alcohol and tips for talking to someone about their alcohol use.

### **How can you cut back on alcohol? <sup>2</sup>**

- Keep track of how much you drink
- Write a list of reasons why you want to cut back on alcohol use
- Count and measure your drinks accurately using standard measurements.
- One drink equals:
  - 12 fl. oz. of regular beer OR
  - 8-9 fl. oz. of malt liquor OR
  - 5 fl. oz. of table wine OR
  - 1.5 fl. oz. of 80-proof spirits/hard liquor
- Set a limit on the number of times per day or days per week you will drink
- Get support from friends and family to help you reduce drinking
- Talk to a professional if you have difficulty cutting back or quitting alcohol





- Pace yourself; sip slowly and ensure you drink no more than one standard drink/hour
- Eat food while drinking; this will allow the alcohol to be absorbed by your body at a slower rate
- Find alternatives to drinking such as healthy activities, hobbies, or socializing with non-drinkers
- Identify and avoid triggers such as people, places, or things that contribute to your alcohol use
- Develop a plan to deal with urges; talk to someone that is encouraging and motivating

## How do you talk to someone about their alcohol use? <sup>3</sup>

- Talk about your worries when the person is sober
- Give facts
- Do not label them while talking. For example, do not call them an alcoholic.
- Offer your help
- Suggest activities that do not include alcohol
- Give your support during treatment

Talking to a coworker, family member or friend about their use of alcohol can be challenging and difficult as sometimes others do not realize they are consuming too much alcohol or that they are consuming it for the wrong reasons. Starting the conversation can be tough, but you may be able to help someone move in a healthy direction and ultimately, save a few lives.

For more information, visit the Navy and Marine Corps Public Health Center's [Substance Use and Misuse website](#).

## References

1. Alcohol and Public Health. Fact Sheets. Alcohol Use and Health. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <http://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/alcohol-use.htm>. Updated 1 October 2012. Accessed November 2012.
2. Tips to try. Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol and Your Health. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/Strategies/TipsToTry.asp>. Accessed November 2012.
3. "You drink too much." What to say – and what not to say – to address your friend or family members' alcohol use. Military Pathways. <http://www.militarymentalhealth.org/blog/2014/04/you-drink-too-much-what-to-say-and-what-not-to-say-to-address-your-friend-or-family-members-alcohol-use/>. Accessed May 2014.