

Alcoholism

Also called: Alcohol dependence

For most adults, moderate alcohol use is not harmful. However, nearly 17.6 million adults in the United States are alcoholics or have alcohol problems.

Alcoholism is a disease with four main features:

1. Craving - a strong need to drink
2. Loss of control - not being able to stop drinking once you've begun
3. Physical dependence – withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating or shakiness after stopping drinking
4. Tolerance - the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol in order to get “high”

Alcoholism carries many serious dangers. Heavy drinking can increase the risk of certain cancers. It can cause damage to the liver, brain and other organs. It can cause birth defects. It increases the risk of death from car crashes and other injuries as well as the risk of homicide and suicide.



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