



Huron County Board of Mental Health and Addiction Services

2 Oak Street • Norwalk, Ohio 44857 • 419-681-6268

Alcohol Awareness Month

April is Alcohol Awareness Month, a tradition that started as a way to increase awareness about a disease many Americans suffer from. The idea is to spread information locally, statewide, and overall nationwide. Alcohol has touched almost all of our lives in one way or another. The general goal of this month is to create some sort of catalyst for change and awareness.

Alcohol Awareness Month is a public health program organized by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence as a way of increasing outreach and education regarding the dangers of alcoholism and issues related to alcohol. The program was started in April 1987 with the intention of targeting college-aged students who might be drinking too much as part of their newfound freedom. It has since become a national movement to draw more attention to the causes and effects of alcoholism as well as how to help families and communities deal with drinking problems.

The Importance of Alcohol Awareness Month

A big part of Alcohol Awareness Month is to point out the stigma that still surrounds alcoholism and substance abuse in general. For many, denial is a common trait among those struggling with or affected by alcoholism or alcohol abuse. Many individuals often underestimate the amount they drink, the duration of their drinking problem, the impact it has had on their life, or overestimate their ability to control their drinking or to quit. Denial is also common among friends and family members who are uncomfortable acknowledging and accepting the gravity and reality of alcohol abuse they witness.

With this in mind, Alcohol Awareness Month gives us the opportunity to increase our efforts to reach people who may not fully understand the dangers of unhealthy alcohol consumption. MHAS would like to spend some time this April to draw attention to the facts regarding alcohol use, stigma surrounding alcoholism, the warning signs of the condition, how to recognize if you may have a problem with alcohol, and how to find treatment if necessary. Programs like Alcohol Awareness Month exist to ensure that families and communities have the resources, information, and options available to positively impact and shift the crisis of alcoholism.

The Prevalence of Alcohol Abuse And Alcoholism in the U.S.

Below is a quick overview of statistics from the CDC regarding alcohol use in the United States.

Alcohol Use and Youth

The 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Survey found that among high school students, during the past 30 days:

- 29% drank alcohol.
- 14% binge drank.
- 5% of drivers drove after drinking alcohol.
- 17% rode with a driver who had been drinking alcohol.
- About 32% of female high school students consumed alcohol compared with 26% of male high school students. Binge drinking was also more common among female (15%) than male (13%) high school students.

Alcohol Use and College Age Adults

The dangers of alcohol abuse go beyond college kids getting too drunk at parties.

- An estimated 14.4 million Americans ages 18 and older had an alcohol use disorder in 2018.
- Across the nation, 26.45% individuals 18 and older reported that they engaged in binge drinking in the past month (typically 4 drinks for women and 5 drinks for men in about 2 hours).
- 6.6% engaged in heavy alcohol use (binge drinking on 5 or more days in the past month) in the past month.



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Alcohol Use and Women:

- Nearly half of adult women report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Approximately 13% of adult women report binge drinking and on average do so 4 times a month, consuming 5 drinks per binge.
- About 18% of women of child-bearing age (i.e., ages 18–44 years) binge drink.
- In 2019, 4% of women overall and 8% of women aged 18 to 25 years had an alcohol use disorder.

Alcohol Use and Men:

- Almost 59% of adult men report drinking alcohol in the past 30 days.
- Approximately 22% of men report binge drinking and on average do so 5 times a month, consuming 8 drinks per binge.
- In 2019, 7% of men had an alcohol use disorder.

Dangers of Alcohol

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), alcohol is the 3rd leading cause of death in the United States. Excessive alcohol consumption is linked to approximately 4 million emergency room and doctor visits and almost 90,000 deaths around the country annually. These instances stem from situations involving alcohol poisoning, accidents, reckless driving and vehicular fatalities, domestic violence, and drug interactions for example. In addition, one-third of suicides in the United States are alcohol related deaths.

These numbers suggest that problematic alcohol use continues to plague our communities, and awareness about alcohol and its harmful effects on our lives, is necessary in order to protect ourselves and our loved ones. Even though it's widely available and socially acceptable to drink, we can see that alcohol is still responsible for thousands of deaths and countless injuries every year. Moreover, despite the fact that it's addictive and dangerous, people continue to normalize alcohol consumption in a way that would never be tolerated with other drugs.

Everywhere you look you can find alcohol: it's in advertisements, movies and television shows, restaurants, at parties, concerts, work meetings, and even in some movie theaters these days. People drink at home, on weekends, in the evenings after work, at barbecues and celebrations, and for a variety of other reasons. In short, alcohol is extremely accessible, and drinking alcohol has become just as socially acceptable as drinking tea or water. However, unlike other beverages, alcohol is in fact a drug, and it's dangerous, it's addictive, and consuming it in excess can have extremely negative and at times deadly consequences.

Alcohol Use Disorder

To understand why there is an alcohol awareness month, you must first understand the disease itself. A lot of us have heard of the term alcoholism and assume that this is the only form of alcohol abuse that occurs. Many are not aware that alcohol abuse can come in several different forms. The true term for alcohol abuse is Alcohol Use Disorder. This can still include alcoholism but is not limited to only that.

Alcohol Use Disorder is an affliction that can be observed if you use alcohol to the point where it becomes an issue. If you cannot control your urges and continue to use it even though it causes problems, you may be suffering from this. You may also start to notice withdrawal symptoms if you stop drinking and an increase in your tolerance. (****If you do experience any withdrawal symptoms, we strongly suggest you seek immediate medical attention.****)

Binge drinking is another type of Alcohol Use Disorder. This is the consumption of excessive alcohol in a short period of time. For women this means consuming 4 drinks within 2 hours, for men, 5 drinks. This can have long term and short term effects on your health. This is not an obvious form of alcohol abuse, mostly because it can occur as little as once a week. However, this is the most common form of Alcohol Use Disorder.

If you are not aware of what one "drink" means it could be any of the following:

- 12 oz. of beer



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- 8 oz. of malt liquor
- 5 oz. of table wine
- 5 oz. of 80 proof liquor

What signs to look for

There are many different signs to look for when determining if someone suffers from alcohol use disorder. Some are very apparent while others require you to take notice. If you are experiencing hangovers often accompanied by nausea, shakiness, sweating, and trouble sleeping; these are short term symptoms. Many people try to fight off these symptoms by drinking more. While these may seem like minor consequences, if this becomes a pattern that is sign there may be a problem. If you try to stop drinking and are unable to because you constantly crave alcohol this is a clear sign it is time to ask for help. ***Again, if you do experience any withdrawal symptoms, we strongly suggest you seek immediate medical attention.***

Drinking can cause a lot of conflict in your life aside from your health. If you start missing out on daily activities like work or outside interests due to hangovers or other consequences from your alcohol use, then your life is being affected by drinking. Keep an eye out for family and friends; they may not consciously realize what they are doing. When drinking creates problems with friends or family it is a clear sign that you may have an issue with alcohol.

Recovery from Alcohol Use Disorder

Taking that first step toward recovery may seem overwhelming. Because of how acceptable alcohol is, and how much pressure there is to drink it, seeking help for substance abuse related to alcohol and/or recovering from alcohol addiction can be extremely difficult. After reviewing the types of drinking and standard alcohol consumption above, it is important to evaluate your own drinking patterns. If you find that you are currently consuming more than what is recommended or safe, it may be time to consider reducing the amount you consume if possible or seeking help. If you determine you have a problem with alcohol, recovery is possible and professional help and support groups are available.

It is important to understand that addiction is a treatable disorder. Research on the science of addiction and the treatment of substance use disorders has led to the development of research-based methods that help people to stop using substances such as alcohol and resume productive lives. Treatment from alcohol addiction can be managed successfully. Treatment enables people to counteract addiction's disruptive effects on their brain and behavior and regain control of their lives.

The road to recovery from alcohol use disorder is not only possible, it's also fairly common. More than a third of U.S. adults who were dependent on alcohol find recovery, says the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). Behavioral therapies and recovery supports can help people battling alcohol use disorder modify their attitudes and behaviors related to substance use, develop coping skills to handle stressful situations, manage various triggers, and create a support system that strengthens their recovery. There are about 20 million individuals and their family members who are living in recovery. This proves that anything is possible and this is why it is so important to raise awareness in our community.

Spread the word

While a month is not enough time to educate and help everyone recover, we hope it will at least get our community talking about alcohol. There are many people still in the dark about alcohol use disorder and alcohol abuse and there is still a large stigma associated with alcoholism and substance abuse in general. There are those who struggle silently with the disease or some who may not know how to detect when someone needs help. The most important thing we can do as a society is to recognize that alcohol is a problem and this month is an opportunity for us to help fix that.

A huge part of Alcohol Awareness Month is celebrating an Alcohol-Free Weekend. We would like to challenge our community to participate in the Alcohol-Free Weekend, April 9th-11th. The aim of this weekend is to go 72 hours without drinking a single drop of alcohol. This may seem like a small task to some, but to others it could be almost impossible. That is the reason this weekend is so important. If it allows even one person to come to realization that they can't go even 72 hours without alcohol, maybe that will inspire them to get some help. ***Please note, if you struggle with alcohol use disorder, we do not recommend you stop drinking without the guidance of a medical professional.***



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Getting Help For Alcohol Addiction

If you feel you or a loved one may be struggling with alcohol use disorder or substance use of any kind, we want you to know you're not alone. We understand how overwhelming it can be to consider seeking help for addiction and we're here to take that burden off your shoulders. We have multiple contracted providers in Huron County for treatment that can help you take the first step toward recovery and a healthier life.

If you or a loved one is struggling with alcohol abuse/dependency, below is a list of local treatment providers to help:

- Family Life Counseling & Psychiatric Service: 567-560-3584
- Firelands Counseling & Recovery Services: 419-663-3737
- Oriana House, Inc.: 567-280-4023
- ALERT (immediate connection to detox/treatment): 1-980-4ALERT4
- Let's Get Real (Peer Recovery Support and Support Groups): 567-743-7130

For more information regarding alcohol and substance use, visit our 'Substance Use' Newsletter section below:

<https://www.hcbmhas.org/newsletters>

Sources: <https://alcoholawareness.org/aam/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/underage-drinking.htm>

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/college-drinking>

<https://www.alcohol.org/awareness-month/>