Alcohol

Quick Facts

• Alcohol is the oldest and most widely used drug in the world. Nearly half of all Americans over the age of 12 are consumers of alcohol.

• Most people don’t have a problem with alcoholism but there are an estimated 10 to 15 million alcoholics or problem drinkers in the United States, with more than 100,000 deaths each year attributed to alcohol.

• What most people don’t realize is that among the nation’s alcoholics and problem drinkers there are as many as 4.5 million adolescents.

Effects of Alcohol

• Alcohol initially serves as a stimulant, and then induces feelings of relaxation and reduced anxiety.

• Consumption of two or three drinks in an hour can impair judgment, lower inhibitions, and induce mild euphoria.

• Binge drinking (five drinks for men and four drinks for women that are consumed in a two hour period) may raise the blood alcohol level to 0.10 percent, high enough to be considered legally intoxicated in every state.

• Once a drinker stops drinking, his or her blood alcohol level decreases by about 0.01 percent per hour.

Risks

Alcohol use and intoxication:

• Smell of alcohol on breath
• Irritability
• Euphoria
• Loss of physical coordination
• Inappropriate or violent behavior
• Loss of balance
• Unsteady gait
• Slurred and/or incoherent speech
• Loss of Consciousness
• Slowed thinking
• Depression
• Impaired short-term memory
• Blackouts

Alcohol withdrawal, experienced by alcoholics and problem drinkers:

• Tremors
• Agitation
• Anxiety and panic attacks
• Paranoia and delusions
• Hallucinations (usually visual)
• Nausea and vomiting
• Increased body temperature
• Elevated blood pressure and heart rate
• Convulsions
• Seizures