

**Mood:** Fatigue and emotions such as frustration, anger and loneliness can increase the effects of alcohol on a person's behavior.

**Gender:** Due to the differences in body composition and chemistry, females will be affected more than males of equal weight, after drinking the same amount of alcohol.

**Body weight:** Lower weight and/or higher ratio of fat to muscle results in a higher alcohol concentration.

#### 6. There are ways to minimize health and safety risks when serving alcohol.

- Emphasize friendship, conversation and other activities rather than drinking;
- Offer a variety of attractive non-alcoholic drinks that are easily available;
- Provide a variety of foods;
- Serve all drinks to guests rather than having an open bar;
- Inform guests whether or not beverages such as punch contain alcohol;
- Stay alert and assume responsibility to help a guest who may have had too much to drink;
- Create an environment that allows guests to feel comfortable making a personal choice about alcohol use or nonuse.

#### 7. Avoid situations where someone else's alcohol, tobacco or other drug use may put you at risk.

- Don't ride with an impaired or intoxicated driver;
- Use seat belts at all times to protect both drinkers and nondrinkers against being injured or killed in an alcohol-related crash;
- Be cautious in unfamiliar environments;
- Recognize high risk sexual situations.

The need for guidelines about alcohol use is clear and the responsibility for establishing and following them is shared by all of us. Each of us can:

- Work to establish and follow organizational policies and guidelines about alcohol use;
- Talk with family members, friends and colleagues about alcohol use choices and guidelines;
- Ensure that alcohol, if used, is used legally, safely and appropriately;
- Share our concern with those whose alcohol use is unhealthy, risky, inappropriate or unacceptable;
- Assist people with a drinking problem to get the best help available.

## Choices And Influences

# Setting Guidelines for Choices About Alcohol



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*“I really don’t think about my drinking, I just drink as much as everyone else does.”*

—Josh, high school senior

*“I never get drunk, except for New Year’s Eve.”*

—Sue, business executive

*“I don’t like to throw up so I try to stop drinking before I vomit.”*

—Todd, college student

*“If my kid is going to get drunk, I want it to be at home.”*

—Christine, parent

*“There’s always room for one more beer.”*

—Paul, salesperson

These comments are examples of guidelines that influence how people use alcohol. While comments like these provide little guidance for using alcohol, there are many more people who have no guidelines or standards at all for their use of alcohol.

Even though well over half of the adults in this country drink alcohol, many have been reluctant to talk about the use of alcohol. Some have concerns about the role of alcohol in their own home or in social settings. Some have parents who feared that talking might encourage alcohol use, or who just didn’t know

what to say. Whatever the reason, silence has often given permission to drink, sometimes inappropriately, and has provided no guidelines for what is safe and appropriate use of alcohol.

The choice to use or not to use alcohol is a personal one for which each person is accountable. However, people of all ages need to understand that the consequences of their personal decisions can have important effects on others. There are only two reasonable decisions regarding the use of alcohol: not to use it at all or to use it legally and appropriately.

The personal choices we make about alcohol use are clearly messages to others. We can be positive and healthy role models if we choose not to drink or if we choose to use alcohol moderately, appropriately and within the guidelines discussed below:

#### 1. The use of alcohol is a personal choice.

No one should be pressured to drink or not to drink, or made to feel uneasy or embarrassed because of a personal choice. Many people will choose to use alcohol safely, moderately and appropriately. Other people will simply have no desire to experience the taste or effects. Some people with a family history of chemical dependency may also choose to not risk any use of alcohol.

#### 2. Alcohol use is not essential for enjoying family or social events.

The value of social activities results from the friendship and support we provide for

each other. Drinking alcohol should not be seen as a necessary component of a social event.

Alcohol use can be an enjoyable complement to other activities, not an activity in and of itself.

#### 3. Drinking that leads to impairment or intoxication is unhealthy and risky.

Drunkenness is not a condition to be admired, laughed at or taken lightly. Rude or destructive behavior which results from alcohol use is socially unacceptable and could be indicative of personal problems. A person drinking excessively can experience serious consequences and act in dangerous and unhealthy ways.

#### 4. Know when to abstain from alcohol.

- When recovering from chemical dependency;
- When under the legal drinking age;
- When planning to get pregnant, when pregnant or while nursing;
- When operating equipment—automobiles, motorcycles, snowmobiles, boats, ATVs, power tools, firearms, etc.;
- When swimming, skiing, snowboarding, climbing or doing other risky physical activities;
- When working or studying;
- When performing in athletics or fine arts;

➤ When taking certain medications or when diagnosed with certain medical conditions;

Each of these situations present specific risks and should be times when alcohol use is avoided.

#### 5. Know personal limits of moderation.

Everyone who chooses to drink should know his/her limits of moderation. The following information is essential in establishing personal limits:

#### Strength and quantity of drinks:

A 12 oz. bottle of beer, a 9 oz. wine cooler, a 5 oz. glass of wine or a 1-1/2 oz. of liquor contain approximately the same amount of alcohol. The percentage of alcohol may also vary by drink. A person can become just as intoxicated drinking beer, wine, wine coolers or liquor.

**Time:** The number of hours you have been drinking. Unless you drink less than one standard drink per hour, your alcohol concentration level will increase over time.

**Food intake:** Eating while drinking slows down the absorption of alcohol into the blood stream.

**Biological Makeup/Age:** Individuals metabolize alcohol differently. Also, as people age, their metabolism changes reducing the amount of alcohol a person can safely consume.