

*Maryland State Bar Association Lawyer Assistance Program
Wellness Tip Sheet*

Alcohol Abuse and Dependency

If you think you have a problem you probably do.

Alcohol is such a large part of our social culture it is sometimes difficult to recognize when use becomes abuse or dependency.

How much is too much?

You will probably be surprised to find out that moderate drinking is less than what you think.

- **For women:** no more than 1 drink per day
- **For men:** up to 2 drinks a day

How much is too much?

- **For women:** more than 7 drinks per week or 3 drinks per occasion
- **For men:** more than 14 drinks per week or 4 drinks per occasion

One drink equals:

- a 4-ounce glass of wine
- a 12-ounce beer
- a 10-ounce wine cooler
- a 1-ounce shot of 80-proof liquor

You may have a drinking problem if you:

- Cannot stop with one drink
- Alcohol takes up a great deal of your time, energy and focus
- Black out or forget what you did while drinking
- Regularly drink more than you planned to
- Feel ashamed or guilty about your drinking
- Lie about or hide your drinking habits
- Have friends or family members who are worried about your drinking.

When does abuse become dependency?

There is a very fine line between alcohol abuse and alcoholism. Alcoholism includes all the symptoms of alcohol abuse except alcoholism includes dependency. The two major warning signs of alcoholism are tolerance and withdrawal:

Tolerance means that over time you need to drink more and more alcohol to have the same effect.

Withdrawal is your body's way of telling you it physically needs alcohol. Withdrawal symptoms begin 6 to 48 hours after your last drink. Alcohol is one of the most dangerous drugs to withdrawal from and symptoms can be mild, violent or even fatal.

Withdrawal symptoms include:

- Headache
- Depression and anxiety
- Insomnia
- Sweating
- Shakiness or trembling
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite
- Fatigue

If you are concerned about yours or someone else's alcohol use call the Lawyer Assistance Program for free, confidential assistance and speak to a counselor at

410-685 7878 x 3041 or toll free at 800-492-1964