



# Alcohol Awareness: An Orientation

# Alcohol Facts

- The most commonly used addictive substance in the U.S.
  - 17.6 million people (1 in 12 adults) suffer from alcohol use disorders or dependence
  - Millions more engage in risky binge drinking patterns that could lead to alcohol problems
- Alcoholism is the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the nation

# Alcohol Facts

- Up to 40% of U.S. hospital beds used to treat alcohol-related health conditions
- Can damage emotional stability, finances, career, and personal relationships
- Underage use is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined

# Alcohol's Effect

- Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant
- Rapidly absorbed and circulated throughout the body, including the brain
- “Getting drunk” results from drinking more alcohol than the body can break down

# Alcohol's Effect

- Factors affecting how people react to alcohol
  - Age, gender, race or ethnicity
  - Physical condition (weight, fitness level)
  - Amount of food eaten before drinking alcohol
  - How quickly alcohol is consumed
  - Use of other drugs
  - Family history of alcohol problems

# Alcohol-Related Problems

- Dementia, stroke and neuropathy
- Cardiovascular problems, including hypertension
- Psychiatric problems, including depression, anxiety and suicide
- Social problems, including unemployment, family problems, child maltreatment, fights and homicide

# Alcohol-Related Problems

- Unintentional accidents and injuries
- Increased risk for many kinds of cancer
- Liver diseases, including cirrhosis
- Gastrointestinal problems, including pancreatitis and gastritis
- Alcohol abuse or dependence – alcoholism

# Understanding Alcohol Intake

- A standard alcohol drink contains about 14 grams of pure alcohol (0.6 ounces)
  - 12 ounces beer or cooler
  - 8 ounces malt liquor
  - 5 ounces of wine
  - 1.5 ounces or “shot” of distilled spirits
- What matters is the amount of alcohol consumed, not the type of alcoholic drink



# Alcohol Intoxication is Dangerous

- Impaired brain function results in loss of balance, coordination and motor skills, poor judgment, reduced reaction time
- Causes dilation of blood vessels resulting in rapid loss of body heat
- Damage to a developing fetus if consumed by a pregnant women
- Increased risk of disease and other injuries

# Dangers of Binge Drinking

- Drinkers who mix alcohol with energy drinks are three times more likely to binge drink
- One in six adults binge drinks four times a month
- More common among young adults 18–34, but drinkers aged 65+ binge drink more often
- More common among those with household incomes of \$75,000 or more

# Dangers of Binge Drinking

- 92% of U.S. adults who drink excessively report binge drinking
- 70% of binge drinking episodes involve adults age 26 years and older
- Men are twice as likely as women to binge drink
- Binge drinkers are 14 times more likely to report alcohol-impaired driving

# Dangers of Binge Drinking

- 90% of the alcohol consumed by youth under age 21 is in the form of binge drinking
- More than half of the alcohol consumed by adults is in the form of binge drinking

# What Can Parents Do?

- Call other parents to ensure social events are alcohol-free and chaperoned by responsible adults
- Refuse to supply alcohol to anyone under 21
- Lock up your alcoholic beverages
- Make sure alcohol is not brought onto your property by your teen's friends
- Report underage drinking

# People Who Should Not Drink

- Children and adolescents under 21
- Anyone who cannot limit their drinking
- Women who are pregnant or may become pregnant
- Individuals who plan to drive a car, operate machinery, etc.
- Those taking prescription or over-the-counter medications that can interact with alcohol

# People Who Should Not Drink

- Individuals with certain medical conditions
- Persons recovering from alcoholism

# Understanding Alcoholism

- Alcoholism is a brain disease
- Like many other diseases, like diabetes and hypertension, it is chronic and lasts a lifetime
- Has symptoms and usually follows a predictable course
- Relapse is not unusual
- Cannot be cured at this time



# Understanding Alcoholism

- The alcoholic is frequently in the grip of a powerful craving for alcohol
- Most alcoholics can't just stop drinking through "willpower"
- Most alcoholics need support and treatment to recover from their disease

# Symptoms of Alcoholism

- Craving – a strong need, or urge, to drink
- Loss of control – being unable to stop drinking once drinking has begun
- Physical dependence – withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness and anxiety after stopping drinking
- Tolerance – the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get "high"

# Recovery from Alcoholism

- Recovery from substance dependence is a voluntarily maintained lifestyle characterized by sobriety, personal health, and citizenship (Betty Ford Institute)
- Recovery from alcohol and drug problems is a process of change through which an individual achieves abstinence and improved health, wellness and quality of life (SAMHSA)

# Guiding Principles of Recovery

- There are many pathways to recovery
- Recovery is self-directed and empowering
- It involves a personal recognition of the need for change and transformation
- Recovery is holistic
- Recovery has cultural dimensions
- It exists on a continuum of improved health and wellness

# Guiding Principles of Recovery

- Recovery is supported by peers and allies
- Recovery emerges from hope and gratitude
- It involves a process of healing and self-redefinition
- Recovery involves addressing discrimination and transcending shame and stigma
- It involves (re)joining and (re)building a life in the community
- Recovery is a reality – it can, will and does happen!