

# Some New Information on Alcoholism

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Like cancer or heart disease, alcoholism is a primary chronic disease with its own symptoms and causes. The disease is progressive and often fatal if not treated.

Abusing alcohol can harm many of the body's major organs and systems. It increases risks for various cancers, cirrhosis of the liver, diabetes, peptic ulcers, stroke, infertility, brain damage and memory loss.

## Recognize the symptoms

Alcoholics have a reaction to alcohol that makes them crave more, and more drinking triggers more craving.

Heredity seems to play a major role in alcoholism; studies show children of alcoholics are at greater risk of the disease. Other risk factors are family and social environment, personality and psychological makeup.

Some alcoholics start out as moderate drinkers, increasing their use and dependence on alcohol over time. Others crave more from the start. Late-onset alcoholism often occurs when a moderate drinker suddenly experiences a stressful event, such as losing a job or spouse.

When you reach the point you lose control of your drinking, you have to say, "I'm an alcoholic."

## Check your patterns

Few alcoholics will admit they have a problem. It's a characteristic to believe you're OK -- everything and everybody else are wrong. Those willing to face facts usually find plenty of clues that their drinking is out of control. You may suffer from alcoholism if:

- You have experienced problems on the job, with the law or with your family because of your drinking.
- You avoid parties or places where liquor isn't served.
- You look forward to a set time in the day when you can start drinking.
- You worry alcohol won't be available when you want it.
- You periodically try to slow down or stop drinking.
- You always have a "good reason" why you need a drink -- perhaps a tough day at work, an argument or stress.
- Friends, family members and/or others have talked to you about your drinking.

## Get help

Seek help if you abuse alcohol. Contact Alcoholics Anonymous, a hospital or nearby substance-abuse facility for information about programs in your area.

Quitting drinking is essential to recovery, but it's only part of the process. Treatment is a learning experience in which you build self-esteem, reduce stress and perhaps, develop your spirituality .

It's a matter of rebuilding yourself through small but positive changes. Step by step, you become strong enough to take control of your life.

Remember that Southwest EAP is here to help you and your household. If you or a loved one is experiencing problems with substances please feel free to reach out and see how Southwest EAP can help. Contact us confidentially anytime.