



the portage path behavioral health reference guide to:

Binge Drinking

“My girlfriend doesn’t drink that often, so I guess she’s not an alcoholic. But when we go to a party, she doesn’t seem to know when to stop drinking. Sometimes I even end up carrying her to the car. The next day, she’s hungover, but she says she deserves the fun from the night before after the long week she had.”

Does this sound familiar? While this girl probably doesn’t fit the definition of an alcoholic, she is most likely a binge drinker, and that puts her at risk for further alcohol abuse and plenty of health problems.

Many people work during the week and save their fun for the weekend - work hard, play hard. While these people may seem to be doing the responsible thing by waiting until Friday night to have a few drinks with friends, they may actually be at risk for binge drinking.

Ask Yourself....

Do you use alcohol in ways that are harmful to yourself or others? The University of Saskatchewan has developed a list of questions to help you determine the answer.

- Do you often spend an evening getting “smashed” at the bar?
- Do you consider your friends your “drinking buddies?”
- Do you set limits on how much you drink and repeatedly violate these limits?
- Do you need to drink to have a good time?
- Do you ever regret saying or doing things when you were drunk?
- Do you lie to your family and friends about how much you drink? Do you miss classes or work because of your drinking?
- Do you usually have a hangover the morning after you drink?
- Do you usually spend more money than you can afford on drinking? Do you have “beer money” set aside?
- Do others criticize how much you drink?
- Have you ever been in a fight while you were drunk?
- Do you ever drink to forget your problems?

IF YOU ANSWERED YES TO EVEN THREE, OR ANY ONE OF THESE IS EXTREMELY RELEVANT TO YOUR DRINKING PATTERNS, CONSIDER SEEKING HELP.

Binge drinking is the rapid consumption of large amounts of alcohol, leading to intoxication. Signs of binge drinking include:

- DRINKING WITH THE INTENTION OF GETTING DRUNK
- DRINKING FAST, CHUGGING OR SLAMMING, PLAYING DRINKING GAMES
- REACHING A HIGH BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVEL
- DRINKING OVER FOUR STANDARD ALCOHOLIC DRINKS ON ONE OCCASION FOR MEN, OR OVER THREE STANDARD DRINKS FOR WOMEN

Formerly a problem primarily on college campuses, researchers found that binge drinking among adults aged 26 to 55 jumped 25 percent over a four year period - it’s not just for college kids any more.

Effects of Binge-ing Frequent binge drinkers have more problems than their social drinking or non-drinking counterparts, according to experts. “There are serious personal and social consequences to binge drinking,” says Bob Waldsmith, a therapist at Portage Path who leads a substance abuse group. “These include legal repercussions, physical and emotional pain, as well as shame and guilt.”

Binge drinking can lead to unplanned sexual activity, car accidents and violence. According to the Center for Alcohol and Drug Studies, 1 in 3 suicides involves alcohol, 75 to 90% of rapes on college campuses involve alcohol and abuse of alcohol is present in 70% of all murders and violent crimes. The average DUI arrests cost \$3,000.

Physical effects can be deadly. When large amounts of alcohol are consumed and it goes directly into the bloodstream, the brain is deprived of oxygen and shuts down the major systems in the body. Alcohol poisoning occurs when the level of alcohol in the body is so high that it causes a collapse of the autonomic nervous system. This can lead to severe liver damage, brain damage, lung infections, a coma, and even death.

You have questions, we have answers. For more information on binge drinking and alcoholism or local treatment options, call Portage Path at 330-253-3100, Alcoholics Anonymous at 800-897-6737 or visit the Al-Anon and Al-Ateen webpages at www.al-anon.alateen.org



What You Should Know About Your Drinks

The standard size isn't what the bar serves

Many countries have varying opinions about how much alcohol is socially acceptable to consume, making it difficult to define "binge drinking". However, clinically speaking and in the US, when referring to one "standard drink", researchers mean:

- One 12 fl. oz. bottle of beer or wine cooler, or
- One 5 fl. oz. glass of wine, or
- One mixed drink containing 1.5 fl. oz. of 80-proof hard liquor, such as gin, whiskey, or rum.

Most people don't realize that the drinks they have out or at home are significantly more than a "standard drink." To put this in perspective, a shot glass actually contains MORE

than 1.5 fl. oz of liquor. The Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand found that to determine "ACTUAL standard drinks consumed", beer drinkers should multiply their self defined drink count by 1.25, 1.95 for wine drinkers and 2.0 for liquor drinkers. For example, if someone claims to drink 7.1 beers, he has actually had almost 9.

Because people are consuming more alcohol than they realize, and the body can only process one standard drink an hour (a little less for women) those who have multiple drinks over several hours are at risk for binge drinking related problems such as increased risk for stroke and cardiovascular problems, irreversible liver damage (and you can't live without your liver), adverse effects on the fetus during pregnancy and neurological damage if continued long-term.



Tips to Stay Safe When Drinking

Treating binge drinking primarily involves education. Once you understand the signs of a binge drinking problem, you can be more aware of these behaviors in yourself or your loved ones. By understanding the effects of rapid intoxication on the body and the mind, people can make better decisions about their behavior. Here are some tips to remember when drinking:

- Set a limit on how much you plan to drink before you even go out and stick to that limit.
- Designate a driver or take public transportation. Even one drink can affect your reflexes.
- Pace yourself. Have no more than one standard drink an hour. Alternate with non-alcoholic drinks.
- Avoid drinking games that glorify drinking more than one standard drink an hour. These games are fast paced and you don't have time to realize your actual consumption.
- Pour your own drinks so you can control the amount of alcohol you intake.

Fast Facts

- There are over 100,000 American deaths related to alcohol annually
- Just one binge can produce irregular heartbeats, high blood pressure, & heart attacks.
- 12 million college undergrads consume 4 billion cans of beer a year (that's an average of 55 six-packs per person annually)
- The body can only process ONE STANDARD DRINK an hour, regardless of water, coffee or food consumption.
- Binge drinkers are 10 times more likely than social or non drinkers to drive impaired.

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call **Portage Path** and find out how we can help:

Web Site www.portagepath.org

Appointments **330-253-3100**
800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

Support Hotline **330-434-9144**
888-434-8878



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