

Visit 10 - When does drinking become Alcohol Use Disorder?



Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) is a common, chronic, life threatening disease

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) is a medical condition related to difficulty controlling alcohol use

It's diagnosed based on **patterns of drinking and their effects**, not willpower or character

AUD exists on a **spectrum**, from mild to severe

AUD is common, treatable, and nothing to be ashamed of.

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)
in the United States

28 million
or **1 in 10**

people ages 12 and older had AUD in 2024.



Source: 2024 NSDUH

How much alcohol is too much?

Excessive drinking includes:

Binge drinking

Women

Men

4

5

or more drinks

or more drinks

On one occasion

Heavy drinking

Women

Men

8

15

or more drinks

or more drinks

In a week



Any drinking
during pregnancy



Any drinking by
people younger than 21

Chronic heavy drinking often leads to:

- High blood pressure.
- Heart disease.
- Liver disease.
- Cancer (colon, breast, throat, mouth, liver)
- Stroke.
- Alcohol use disorder—this affects both physical and mental health.
- Digestive problems.
- Weaker immune system—increasing your chances of getting sick.
- Mental health conditions, including depression and anxiety.
- Learning problems, and issues at school or work.
- Memory problems, including dementia.
- Relationship problems with family and friends.

How much alcohol is too much?

Benefits of not drinking alcohol

- ✓ Your quality of sleep will increase
- ✓ You'll be better hydrated
- ✓ Your memory will begin to improve
- ✓ Your skin health will improve
- ✓ You'll reduce your blood pressure
- ✓ Your liver will be healthier

Good news:

Many of the health consequences can get better or resolve completely if someone stops drinking.

When you stop drinking, your liver may have a chance to recover, your skin and hair will likely improve, your sleep will ultimately improve and your mood will ultimately get better

How much alcohol is too much?

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U.S. Dept Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends:

No drinking/Low risk drinking:

Women – 0-1 standard drink per day

Men – 0-2 standard drinks per day

How much alcohol is too much?

Drinking even 1 drink per day has long term health consequences.

Data collected from 434,321 participants, aged 18–85.

People who had 1-2 drinks on 4+ days per week had a 20 percent higher risk of premature death, compared with those who drank 1-2 drinks on 1-3 days per week.

This increased death risk, the study authors add, remains consistent across all age groups.

How much alcohol is too much?

When Is Drinking in Moderation Still Too Much?

According to the 2020–2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans, certain individuals should not consume alcohol. It's safest to avoid alcohol altogether if you are:

- Taking medications that interact with alcohol
- Managing a medical condition that can be made worse by drinking
- Under the age of 21, the minimum legal drinking age in the United States
- Recovering from alcohol use disorder (AUD) or unable to control the amount you drink
- Pregnant or might be pregnant

In addition, certain individuals, particularly older adults, who are planning to drive a vehicle or operate machinery—or who are participating in activities that require skill, coordination, and alertness—should avoid alcohol completely.

Do you need to make a change? Here are some signs alcohol has too much power over you

Trouble cutting back or stopping?

Spending a lot of time drinking or recovering from drinking?

Strong urges or cravings to drink?

Alcohol affecting health, work, or relationships?

Not everyone with AUD drinks the same amount or in the same way.

<https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/How-much-is-too-much/Whats-the-harm/What-Are-Symptoms-Of-Alcohol-Use-Disorder.aspx>



Today's Interactive Sessions:

AUD Looks Different for Different People

Some people drink daily; others binge drink occasionally.

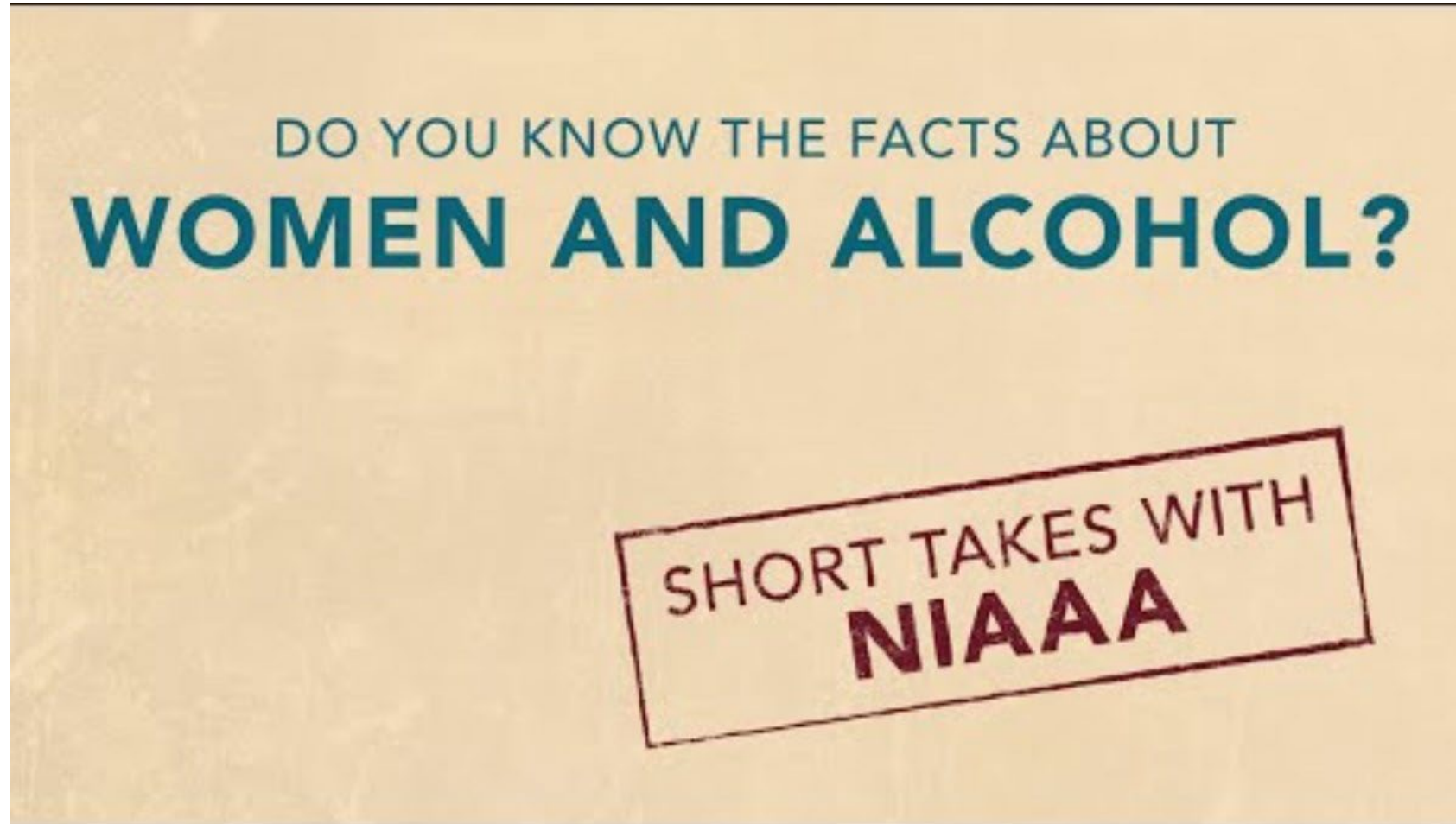
Some people notice physical effects; others notice emotional or social effects first.

Many people with AUD are **high-functioning** in daily life. There's no single "look" or stereotype for AUD.

Watch the videos on the next few slides to learn more about the unique effects of alcohol on women, on minors, and on older adults



Today's Interactive Sessions:





Today's Interactive Sessions:





Today's Interactive Sessions:

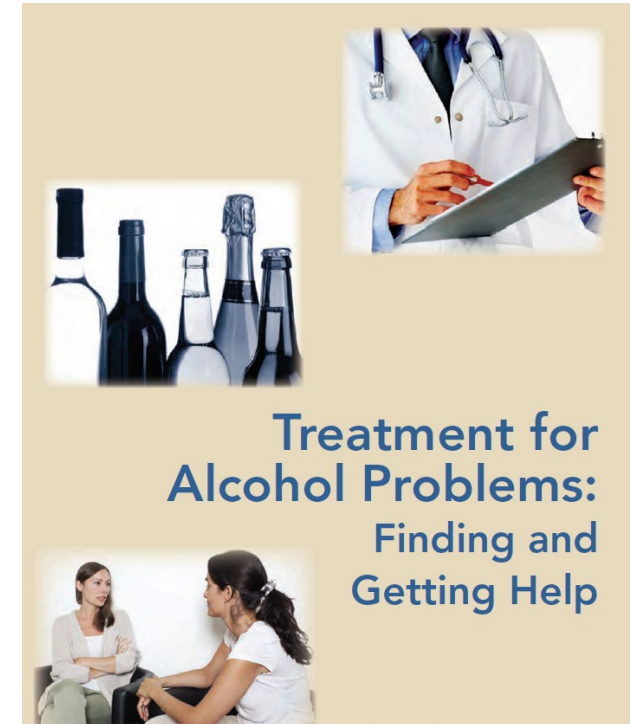
What Are the
**Dangers of Underage
Drinking?**

SHORT TAKES WITH
NIAAA

Professional Help

Recent advances in treatment for alcohol use disorder have provided more choices for patients and health professionals. In addition to this summary, you can review current options in [Treatment for Alcohol Problems: Finding and Getting Help](#) by opening the document below:

<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/sites/default/files/treatment.pdf>





Today's Writing Assignment:

Place today's date in our notebook.

Look back at the slides that discuss-

- *the effects of alcohol on the body (e.g. high blood pressure, cancer)
- *the things that get better when people stop drinking (e.g. sleep, mood, skin, energy) and
- *recommended rate of 0-1 for women & 0-2 drinks/men

Then write 2-3 sentences describing things you want to remember about today's content.

Once you are done a staff member will come check on you and go over your written material with you.