

# News RELEASE

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## Tips for Holiday Alcohol Consumption

The holiday season is filled with fun, friends and festivity. It also is the time of holiday celebrations, and alcohol consumption tends to increase significantly. The American Psychiatric Association's Committee on Treatment Services for Patients with Addictive Disorders recommends safe and moderate consumption of holiday libations.

APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*, states that as many as 90% of adults in the U.S. have had some experience with alcohol, and 60% of males and 30% of females have had one or more alcohol-related adverse life events. The following tips are recommendations for a safe holiday season.

- ? **Pregnant women or women trying to get pregnant** should not drink at all. Alcohol consumption interferes with growth and development of the fetus, causing reduced birth weight, birth defects, learning and behavior disorders, and newborn distress.
- ? **Do not drink and drive, use heavy machinery, or combine with other medications.** Alcohol impairs the ability to react, causes drowsiness, and affects judgment. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that about 3 in 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related car accident at some time in their lives. In 2000, alcohol-related fatalities increased for the first time since 1995.
- ? **People with a family history of alcoholism, or a prior history of alcohol abuse, are at increased risk of alcoholism.** People in recovery from an alcohol-related disorder should not drink. More than one-half of adult Americans have direct family experience with alcohol problems, which cost Americans more than 100,000 lives and approximately \$185 billion each year. For individuals in recovery from alcohol abuse or dependence, small amounts of alcohol typically lead to relapse. People who are younger than the legal drinking age should not consume alcohol.
- ? **"But I thought alcohol was good for my heart?"** While there is evidence that moderate amounts of alcohol (no more than two standard drinks in a day for a man or one for a woman) may cause a reduction of risk in developing coronary heart disease in some people, other variables -- age, gender, health status, and other medications consumed can influence alcohol's effect on an individual.

Alcoholism, or alcohol addiction, is a progressive disorder and afflicts approximately 8.2 million adults and youth in the U.S. (U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration 2000). Alcoholism may include the following symptoms -- craving, a strong need or urge to drink; loss of control, (not being able to stop once drinking has begun); physical dependence, withdrawal symptoms such as nausea, sweating, shakiness; and tolerance, the need to drink greater amounts to get "high."

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society, founded in 1844, whose 35,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. For more information, visit the APA Web site at [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org).

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