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A wellness newsletter from your local EFAP.

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With all this talk of Cannabis, let's revisit the issue of ALCOHOL

We hear a lot about cannabis, and we recognize the opioid overdose crisis we are experiencing. But what about alcohol? Where do we stand when it comes to the negative societal impacts and health impacts of our most widely accepted and used drug?

Key Points – from 2019 Canadian Drug Summary, published by the Canadian Center on Substance Use and Addiction (CCSA)

- Alcohol is by far the most common drug used by Canadians and use has increased significantly among females since 2013.
- Approximately 15% of Canadians who drink alcohol consume above Canada's Low-risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines.
- The risky use of alcohol is still the most prevalent among young adults (age 18-24).
- The use and risky use of alcohol by underage youth and young adults has remained steady in recent years.
- In 2017, the rate of hospitalizations entirely caused by alcohol (249 per 100,000) was comparable to the rate of hospitalizations for heart attacks (243 per 100,000) and the rate was thirteen times higher than for opioids.
- In 2014, alcohol contributed to 14,826 deaths in Canada, representing 22% of all substance use attributable deaths.

CCSA's National Addictions Awareness Week (Nov 25 to Dec 1, 2019) highlights issues and solutions to help address alcohol and other drug-related harm. It provides an opportunity for Canadians to learn more about prevention, to talk about treatment and recovery, and to bring forward solutions for change.

Stigma is a significant barrier to wellness and good health for people who use substances. This year's theme is **Stigma Ends with Me** in hopes of increasing understanding of the devastating stigma associated with substance use and its impact on the well-being of people touched by this health issue. CCSA will be releasing a suite of resources to help reduce stigma to support people who want to facilitate conversations and increase awareness of the stigma surrounding people who use, their supports, and service providers. Ending stigma and breaking down barriers to recovery and wellness or good health is extremely important.

Spread the Message - Using the hashtag #StigmaEndsWithMe, please share on Instagram, Twitter and other social media platforms photos of your local NAAW events showing how you are trying to end stigma within your community.

Office Locations:

625C 11th Avenue
Campbell River, BC

280B Anderton Road
Courtenay, BC

Phone 250-287-2266

Toll free 1-866-789-2266

www.uics.ca

www.ccsa.ca Canadian Center for Substance Abuse and Addiction

Getting help: acknowledging attitudes that create barriers

Did you know, that a [study](#) by NESARC found that 23% of adults surveyed with a lifetime alcohol use disorder have never received treatment? While the decision to not seek treatment can depend on many individual factors (including finances, access to services, etc.), the most common barriers to treatment are our beliefs, including:

- “I should be strong enough to handle it on my own”
- “I thought the problem would get better by itself”
- “I didn’t think my problem was serious enough”
- “I was too embarrassed to discuss it with anyone”

If you find yourself agreeing with the above statements, you’re not alone. Almost 42% of individuals surveyed by NESARC thought they should be “strong enough to handle it” on their own. Considering that alcohol is the most commonly abused substance in Canada today, we know this belief can’t be true – yet it persists.

While it is difficult to talk about fear, stigma, or shame relating to alcohol use, we hope that acknowledging these beliefs as common barriers to treatment will encourage you to discuss your concerns. A good mental health professional will be willing and able to discuss these concerns with you, without judgement.

Link to study:

<https://www.recoveryanswers.org/research-post/what-are-barriers-to-seeking-alcohol-treatment/>

Alcohol Consumption: When is it a Problem?

The answer is, it depends. Not everyone is affected in the same way by alcohol, regardless of the amount consumed. Some people find it easy to moderate their drinking, setting limits for themselves when they go out. For example, you may have found if you have more than two shots of hard liquor, you feel hungover the next day. So, you decide to limit yourself to no more than two drinks when you go out. You have no difficulty doing this, as you drink your beverage slowly and choose water or pop before you have your second cocktail. For you, drinking more than two is a problem because you say it is.

For someone else, they may find that once they’ve had even one drink, they are unable to moderate their intake. One drink may lead to a blackout experience where they can’t remember much – if anything – about what they did or said. This can be a very frightening experience! Did I drink and drive? How did I get home? What did I say? Who saw me?

Maybe your drinking has affected your work, maybe it hasn’t. Are you arriving to work feeling sluggish after a weekend of partying? How’s your overall health? Are you taking care of yourself?

Health Canada lists the following effects from drinking too much alcohol:

drowsiness	confusion or memory loss
dizziness	blackouts
slurred speech	negative mood states (depression)
reduced inhibition	violence
loss of coordination skills	suicide
inability to think and judge clearly	vomiting and choking
inability to estimate distances	irregular heartbeat
decreased reaction times	respiratory depression, coma, or death

Maybe you’ve never experienced any of the above problems when drinking. Perhaps your only problem is that your partner hates it when you drink. They complain about your behaviour, your loud voice, your embarrassing jokes... or maybe they have a fear of drinking because they grew up in a home with alcoholism. If so, your drinking is a problem for your partner.

In the light of our own circumstances, it is important to evaluate how drinking affects our mental and physical health, self-esteem, relationships, and work. Use the links listed below to help reduce your risk for problematic drinking.

Reduce your risk

Responsible drinking saves lives.

- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink. Your risk of injury increases with every drink.
- Don’t drink alcohol on an empty stomach. Eat before--and while--you drink.
- Alternate alcoholic beverages with alcohol-free drinks to limit the amount you drink in any three-hour period.
- Drink only if you want to. Don’t feel pressured into accepting a drink.
- Don’t drive. Take a taxi or public transportation, walk, or decide who will be the designated driver before you start drinking.
- Use [Canada’s Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines](#) to help you decide when, where, and how to drink.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/problematic-alcohol-use.html>

contributed by Tara Hope, MA, RCC



Helping vs. Enabling: Supporting Loved Ones with Alcoholism

Having a loved one who is struggling with alcoholism can be an extremely confusing and painful circumstance. Being deceived, being manipulated, being verbally and physically abused, being told everything is fine (when everything is not). These are some of the challenges that loved ones of alcoholics often have to deal with. It is very common for loved ones of alcoholics to say: "It feels like I'm going crazy!"

One of the most challenging issues that loved ones of alcoholics face is knowing how to help the person without enabling the problem. Health, finances, work and relationships are all aspects of a person's life that can be seriously damaged by alcohol. Loved ones usually see this damage occurring before the alcoholic does. From a place of best intentions, loved ones often want to try to minimize the damage. Unfortunately, this is also where enabling can unintentionally occur.

Enabling can be understood as ***acting in a way that shields another person from the consequences of their problem behaviour.*** Enabling prevents the person with the problem behaviour from perceiving their behaviour as a problem and so the behaviour is more likely to continue.

Examples of enabling in the context of alcohol abuse include:

- Calling the person's employer and making up excuses for them when they are too hung over to work.
- Paying for the person's financial obligations when they have spent their money on alcohol.
- Mending the person's other relationships that they damaged while they were intoxicated.
- Pretending that your relationship with the person is fine when you are actually very hurt by the alcohol abuse.

As was stated above, enabling typically comes from a place of best intentions. Enablers simply want to help their alcoholic loved ones, but do not have a clear understanding of how best to do that. This confusion is understandable because real help often doesn't seem like it's helping in the short-term. In fact, it is often the case that things can start to look much worse for the alcoholic in the short-term. This is because when enabling stops the alcoholic is suddenly exposed to the full consequences of their behaviour. They might lose their job, damage their credit rating, or lose some friendships. They might even lose their relationship with you.

Someone might be tempted to ask: how could any of that help? The answer is that it does help, but it helps indirectly, and over the long-term. Once again, in the short-term, the end of enabling often doesn't seem to help the person - it usually results in their getting hurt. But, in the long-term, it helps in two important ways. Firstly, it shows the person that the problem is real and that it is their own behaviour that is hurting them. Secondly, it shows them that they are responsible for this problem and, therefore, they are responsible for its solution.

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Resources

For local resources for problem drinking:

<http://campbellriver.fetchbc.ca/index.html?c=add>

Information about Alcoholics Anonymous www.aa.org; or call Alcoholics Anonymous (see below for local numbers)

Alcoholics Anonymous Support Lines:

Campbell River: 250-287-4313
Comox Valley: 250-338-8042
Port Alice: 250-284-3558
Port Hardy: 250-902-6052
Port McNeill: 250-956-4555 or 250-956-8240

www.smartrecoverybc.com

Island Health's resources are found online at <https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/substance-use-addiction/addiction-substance-use-resources> or call 1-800-661-2121
Monday - Friday: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Evaluate your drinking online:

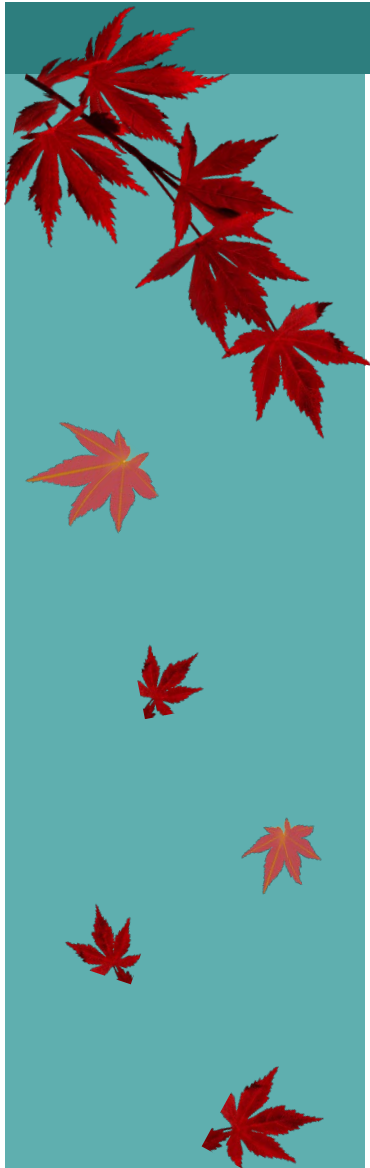
http://camh.alcoholhelpcenter.net/cyd/CYDScreenerP1_0.aspx

Alcohol and Drug Information

Referral Service

604-660-9382

1-800-663-1441



Helping vs. Enabling (cont'd)


In addition to not enabling, there are a few other things a person can do to really help an alcoholic loved one. The first is to let the loved one know your truth. Tell them how the alcoholism has impacted you, that you are concerned for them, and what you believe would be in their best interests. The second thing you can do is provide your loved one with resource information to support their recovery. Lastly, you can provide emotional support that does not enable the problem or cause harm to you, but rather empowers positive change.

We must remember that we are not in control of others' lives. We cannot change their behaviour, only they can. When someone is struggling with alcoholism, they often do not even know that change is necessary until they experience the full consequences of their behaviour. With this being the case, the best loved ones of alcoholics can do is to stop enabling and then provide help that directly supports recovery.

contributed by Graham Walker, MA, RCC

ENABLING ADDICTION: IT TAKES TWO

Are You Part of the Problem or the Solution?

What Hurts Them	What Helps Them
<p>Free Housing When there's always a warm bed to crash on, where's the incentive to give up the addiction?</p> 	<p>Open Dialogue Be there for a text, call or email in case he or she wants to talk, cry or finally ask for help.</p> 
<p>The Cover Up Why lie about your loved one's missed days at work or school? These are telltale signs of unhealthy codependency.</p> 	<p>Honesty Let your loved one see the results of neglected obligations. It could open the door to rehab.</p> 
<p>Supporting the Lifestyle With access to your car, purse, credit card and other valuables, you allow the addiction to thrive.</p> 	<p>Paying for Treatment Offer up a better path. Lead with love, and commit to healing. Treatment and counseling pave the road to recovery.</p> 
<p>Joining the Party Fun times are fine, but if you indulge with the one who has the addiction, it's like saying that a problem doesn't exist.</p> 	<p>Your Abstinence Show the strength of your relationship by removing drugs and alcohol from it. Without saying a word, you speak stability.</p> 
<p>Denial Ignoring the dysfunction and addiction won't make them disappear. Your avoidance supports it.</p> 	<p>Ownership Deal with the substance abuse ASAP. It helps your loved one see the problem, own it, and ask for a way out.</p> 
<p>Zero Consequences Legal drama, jail time and damage to property, to others and even to you are real possibilities. Are you willing to lose your livelihood over it?</p> 	<p>Zero Tolerance Stand firm on solid ground. Be vocal, not emotional, and draw the line about expectations and behavior.</p> 

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