

The Connection

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The FACTS:

- 1,400 college students die each year from alcohol-related causes.
- 25% of college students say that drinking caused them to fall behind in class and get lower grades.
- One night of heavy drinking can impair your ability to think abstractly for up to 30 days!

Source: National Institute on Alcohol

For more information, check out these websites:

- www.aod.uconn.edu
- www.niaaa.nih.gov
- www.aa.gov
- www.higheredcenter.org
- www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov

The College Drinking Problem

When students enter college, they are faced with many opportunities and with opportunities come choices. Some decisions students make will involve alcohol or other drugs. Typically, many students have already used alcohol or drugs before coming to college. People usually form their own opinions about what they expect about the effects of these substances before they ever consider using them. But when students enter college, new freedoms and opportunities open more doors and pressures to start using alcohol. College students are most likely to encounter alcohol at parties or in the residence halls. When faced with these decisions, it is important to remember that you do have choices! It is important to know the damaging consequences alcohol can have on one's life. The choices you make can affect your grades, relationships, your

physical health, and can jeopardize your status as a student at UConn.

However, drinking in college is common. Most students are moderate drinkers and occasionally, students are heavy drinkers. So why are college students drinking if they are aware of its risks? Some students say they drink to socialize with others and have a good time. Others say they drink because of peer pressure and to feel more apart of the crowd. Others drink to avoid their troubles or difficult situations at work, school, or with friends and family. But it is important to know that anyone who drinks is at risk for developing an alcohol problem. A serious problem can develop quickly, and if it goes untreated, it can be potentially harmful for that person and can affect everyone around them too.



What is Alcohol Abuse?

Today it is common for college students to go out to parties and drink a moderate amount of alcohol to have a good time. This type of alcohol consumption is not harmful for most, but for people whose lives are being negatively affected by their alcohol use, they are considered to have an alcohol problem. The severity of an alcohol problem depends on the type of alcohol consumed, and how much and how long one drinks.

Alcohol Abuse is classified as a pattern of drinking that involves one or more of the following problems:

- Exposure to physically dangerous situations, such as drinking and driving.
- Legal problems related to alcohol, such as DUI's.
- Failure to fulfill major obligations at school, work, or at home.
- Persistent relationship problems caused by alcohol use.

***Alcohol abuse does not involve a physical dependence on alcohol but if it is not treated, it

can become more serious and lead to Alcohol Dependence.***

Alcohol Dependence, also called Alcoholism, is a chronic and potentially fatal disease in which a person is addicted to alcohol and is characterized by the following problems:

- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms such as sweating, shakiness, anxiety, and depression when alcohol use is stopped.
- Not having control over their drinking and are not to stop or cut down on their drinking.
- Developing a physical dependence and a tolerance to alcohol by increasing the amount of alcohol to get the same effect.
- More time is spent getting alcohol and recovering from its effects.
- Continued use despite physical or psychological problems caused by alcohol use.



Source: www.ehealthmd.com



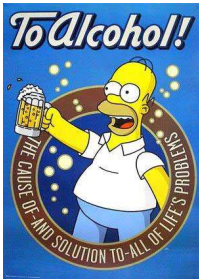
How Do I Know If I Have a Drinking Problem?

There are ways of determining if you or someone you know has a drinking problem. Several good indicators that signal an alcohol problem are if an individual experiences a change in personality when drinking such as unexpected aggression and anger; trouble with performing at school or work as a result of alcohol consumption; increased conflicts with family and increased irritability and anger; legal troubles such as a DUI; and physical problems. Here are some good questions to ask that can help you determine if it is an alcohol-related problem:

- Do you have a few drinks before school, work, or a date to have boost your courage?
- Do a few drinks allow you to be more yourself, more like the person you want to be?
- Has someone talked to you about your drinking?
- When things go wrong in your life, do you drink to feel better?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, then it means that you have a problem and could mean that you use alcohol to deal with the stressors in your life. By detecting the early signs of an alcohol problem, you can seek treatment and prevent the problem from becoming more serious. Reach out for help from your friends and family, or seek professional help such as Counseling and Mental Health Services at 486-4705.

Source: www.counsel.ufl.edu



- Do you do things when you're drunk that you wouldn't do sober?
- Do you forget things that happen while you're drinking?
- Do you sometimes think that you need to drink to have a good time?
- Are you uneasy about you drinking behavior?

The Negative Consequences

With more students binge drinking, the risk of causing harm and hurting those around you increases. There are consequences for both drinkers and non-drinkers who suffer from alcohol use. Abuse of alcohol can negatively impact in the following ways:

- Physical health problems that can affect your stomach and liver and can cause diseases such as heart disease, infections, cancer, high blood pressure, and malnutrition.
- Mental health problems with depression, anxiety, mood swings, and other mental health disorders.
- Impairs judgment and lowers one's inhibitions which can lead to violent behavior, vandalism, sexual assault or rape, and unprotected sex.
- Relationship problems with family and friends.
- Failure to meet responsibilities at work, school, or at home.



- Poor academic performance. Students earn lower grades, do poorly on exams and papers, fall behind in class, and also miss class.

However people who abstain or are moderate drinkers also suffer from the alcohol use of others. Several ways in which they are affected are:

- Being assaulted or getting into an argument or fight.
- Having to take care of a drunk student.
- Having their sleep or study time interrupted.
- Being humiliated or insulted.

******Everyone suffers from the affects of alcohol and once you realize how it can impact your life, you will realize it is not worth endangering your health, your relationships, or your future.******

Source: National Institute of Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

How to Drink Responsibly.

Alcohol use is an individual choice. If you choose to drink, it is good to follow some of these tips on how to drink more responsibly. Following these tips will not only help you cut down on drinking but also reduce the risk of harm that your drinking might cause others. By making these changes to your alcohol consumption, you are also less likely to develop other alcohol-related problems.

- Keep track of how much you drink. This will help you know when to stop drinking before you have too much!
- Know how much a standard drink is to help you count your drinks more accurately. One standard drink is 12oz. of beer, 5oz. of wine, or 1.5oz. of 80-proof spirits of vodka, whisky, etc.
- Set a goal of how many days you'll drink in a week and how much you will have. It's also good to have some days when you don't drink!

- Don't chug! Pace yourself and have only one drink per hour. Make sure to drink non-alcoholic beverages in between, such as water, soda, or juice.



- Eat before and while you drink alcohol. Eating will help slow down how fast you get drunk!
- Avoid the places and the people that make you feel uncomfortable when you don't want to drink.
- When you have the urge to drink, don't try and fight it! Remind yourself of the reasons for your change and ride it out!
- Refuse a drink when you don't want it, and say NO!

Source: www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov



The Affects of Drinking in our Everyday Lives.

Two weeks ago I received a call from a former UConn student who is near and dear to my heart. He called to tell me another student I had worked with had passed away from an alcohol and prescription drug overdose. Although this person had graduated, I took his death very personally and thought "what can we do to prevent this from happening again?" Unfortunately I have known many students whose lives were cut short due to AOD concerns. The question that runs through my mind when these deaths occur is "Would this person have died if the alcohol and/or drugs were removed from the situation?" One hundred percent of the time the answer is most likely not!

One of the greatest challenges the campus community faces is our role with students when they arrive on campus. Most students are at least 18 and for most, behavioral influences have been set in place for years. Media exposure, family and peer influences, community norms, teachers, coaches and neighbors have already molded our students and impacted their thoughts and decision-making regarding AOD. Many of our students already have patterns of alcohol use and abuse before moving onto campus. A *USA Today* article discussed such startling numbers as "7% of fourth graders said that they've had an alcoholic drink in the past year". As a prevention specialist and someone who has worked with AOD issues for 19+ years, my heart sank recognizing the earlier one is exposed and consumes alcohol the greater the risk for dependence and other problems in life.

What is the current state of affairs on campuses? The Harvard School of Public Health College Survey provides sample patterns of AOD use and other health risk behaviors among students. Here are some of their results:

◆ 44% of U.S. college students were engaged in binge drinking/high risk drinking two weeks prior



to the survey. At UConn these rates were much higher (CORE survey 2007, 2006)

◆ Students who were more likely to binge drink were white, and younger than 23. The majority of our students are between 18 and 21.

◆ Students who were binge drinkers in high school were three times more likely to binge drink in college. 80% of students reported drinking and binge drinking prior to attending UConn (first year orientation survey 2004-2008).

◆ Over half the binge drinkers were frequent binge drinkers, that is, they binged three or more times in a two-week period.

◆ Universities that have most students living on or near campus consume more alcohol. Most UConn students live on and/or near campus.

◆ Drinking varies by region. The Northeast has the highest heavy drinking rates. UConn is located in the Northeast region.

A statistic collected at UConn first year orientation survey shows 12% of incoming students reported using prescription drugs illegally or for reasons other than what they were prescribed.

Why are our students turning to AOD in such high numbers? Peer pressure and stress (from academics and other areas of their life) are the number one answers students give. The pressure to be successful and excel academically is significant, too. Many students turn to prescription drugs to enhance their academic performance similar to what athletes do to increase performance. I have had students come to my office and describe how they tricked doctors into prescribing Ritalin for ADHD so they could have the drug for studying and staying alert. Some students also realize that during midterms and final exams they can earn a profit by selling their medications, too!

How about alcohol and prescription drugs serving as a cure for what brings you down? Pop culture does an exceptional job promoting alcohol and drugs as part of our daily life. Let's start with Happy Hour. Why not call it sad hour or discounted drink hour? Because "happy" projects a very different image than sad and sells more drinks. Drink and be happy! The alcohol industry also finds ways to market towards the younger population and target children. If they can get kids drinking before they turn 21, it is more likely that they will continue drinking and remain brand loyal for life. There are drinks that entice attract young drinkers such as Alcapops (frozen alcohol treats), chocolate flavored beers, and flavored liquors in bottles resembling favorite childhood drinks. Commercials highlighting animals, and showcasing beautiful women and macho men send out the message that drinking is cool. Prime time T.V. also advertises drugs that make depression magically go away and weight-loss pills.

Even at UConn we do not have control over these outside influences, but we do have the opportunity to influence the behaviors of our students and encourage them to make safer decisions. Some of the great things we do are talking to students, helping them gain a better understanding of their world, and learning what stressors impact their daily lives. Educating students using a Harm Reduction approach teaches them that small changes can be extremely meaningful and can further reduce the risk of harm. We as role models also need to look at our own behaviors when we attend happy hour or participate in tailgating festivities. I look forward to our offices' continued collaboration regarding these issues and concerns. I am in awe of the tremendous work you all do here on campus.

Special Thanks to Liz Price from Alcohol and Other Drug Services for her contribution.

How to Get Help.

If you or someone you know has an alcohol-related problem, it is important for that individual to get help! There are different types of treatments to help those affected by alcohol. There are educational programs in our community that help individuals suffering from a substance disorder and help educate others how to deal with someone with an alcohol-related problem. At UConn, we offer many services on campus such as Alcohol and Drug Services (AOD) and also Counseling and Mental Health Services. AOD requires that every incoming student complete Alcohol-Edu as part of their alcohol prevention education program. They also have an anger management group to help evaluate an individual's problem and talk about prevention strategies. CMHS also offers a Dual Diagnosis Group to help individuals suffering from substance abuse and mental health illness.



There are also programs close to our community such as the Community Prevention and Addiction Servicing Programs in Willimantic. This service offers drug education programs, DUI educational programs mandated by the court, and deals with all substance problems and detoxification. Contact 1(860)456-3215 for more information.

All alcohol-related problems can be treated and prevented. That is why it is important to get help for someone if they are showing signs of an alcohol-related problem so that the problem doesn't get worse!

If you do know someone who is at risk of harming themselves or others and in need of immediate help, contact CMHS at 486-4705, the University Police at 911, or contact an emergency Hotline such as the National Substance Abuse Hotline at 1800-662-4357 or Alcohol & Drug Abuse Action Hotline at 1800-888-9383.



University of Connecticut

Counseling and Mental Health Services

Monday - Friday, 8:30am to 4:30pm

Come to the CMHS Annex

(located behind SHS) or call 486-4705

After hours, weekends and holidays call 860-486-4705, stay on the line and follow instructions.

Mental Health Online Screenings

On the CMHS website, we offer Mental Health Screenings that allow you to assess yourself regarding **anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, and eating disorders**. The screenings ask basic demographic information from you and you then answer a series of questions to determine whether or not you have any of the symptoms associated with the concerns above.

****Go to www.counseling.uconn.edu and click on our Self-Help Page to learn more about our Screenings.****

Drug Free Campus & Alcohol Abuse Statement

The University of Connecticut supports students and employees in demonstrating responsible conduct in the best interest of their personal health and well being, the community's general welfare, and the rights of others. Persons are expected to assume responsibility for their behavior and must understand that being under the influence of drugs/alcohol in no way lessens their accountability.

Coming up Next Month:

Stress Management



University of Connecticut Student Health Services

Counseling & Mental Health Services

CMHS

Check us out Online!!!

www.counseling.uconn.edu

Mission Statement

The mission of Counseling and Mental Health Services is to provide the highest quality clinical services to promote the emotional, relational, and academic potential of all students. We are committed to the core values of respect, responsiveness, innovation and quality to enhance the unique experience of each individual at the University of Connecticut.

Multicultural Statement

We value and appreciate the uniqueness and diversity of all individuals. Our commitment is to create an environment where all people feel welcome. We recognize the right of human beings to be treated with dignity and respect. We are dedicated to enhancing cultural sensitivity and cultural competency in all of our work. This promotes our growth as individuals and as a community.