

# ALCOHOL USE

College is a time of transition when students have already moved toward change and embracing independence. Responsibilities that come with college can be overwhelming as one learns to adjust to social, emotional, psychological, and academic change. In order to cope with the pressure, it is common for students to channel stress in an unhealthy manner and be expected to fit in socially by drinking. Learning how to drink responsibly, however, is needed to maintain a healthy sense of self, particularly while focusing on academic success.

## POTENTIAL SIGNS OF A PROBLEM

If you have or are beginning to notice that the main focus of many of the activities you are involved in are centered on drinking, you might ask yourself what detrimental effects your drinking has had or may be having on you and your relationships. When you or your peers begin to see a decline in your academic performance, failing to fulfill work, school, or home responsibilities, you might consider how your drinking is contributing to a greater concern. Symptoms may appear such as mood swings, poor concentration, memory lapses, interpersonal problems, and increased risk taking.

Did you know that about 25 percent of students report academic consequences of drinking, including:

- ◆ Poor class attendance
- ◆ Failing to maintain timely school work
- ◆ Struggling academically on exams and assignments, and
- ◆ Obtaining lower academic marks overall?

Does your drinking reflect any of these behaviors?

*Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. (2013). A snapshot of annual high-risk college drinking consequences.*

### Accessing Resources

The Colonial Health Center provides various educational programs and resources to equip students with the knowledge they need to make informed, healthy decisions regarding substance use. Students can participate in group workshops, one on one meetings that provide personalized feedback and/or group counseling sessions to learn about how substance use impacts the body and to develop strategies for reducing their risk for negative consequences due to use.

Health Promotion and Prevention Services Staff offer the following workshops:

- ◆ PowerHour: Alcohol
- ◆ PowerHour: Social Host
- ◆ Alcohol Skills Training Program (ASTP)

Health Promotion and Prevention Services offer the following meetings:

- ◆ Educational Substance Use Assessment (Alcohol and Marijuana)
- ◆ Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students (BASICS)
- ◆ Brief Screening and Intervention for Marijuana

MHS offers individual therapy and the following groups on an as needed basis:

- ◆ Recovery Support Group
- ◆ Rethinking Your Drinking (and drug use)



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# THINKING ABOUT MODERATING YOUR DRINKING?

## Decide what you want from drinking alcohol

- ◆ Think about the pros and cons (short- and long-term) for moderating your use versus maintaining the status quo
- ◆ Also consider what you absolutely want to avoid when you drink

## Set drinking limits

- ◆ What's your upper limit on the number of drinks you consume per week?
- ◆ At what point do you decide you've had enough (consider a BAC limit)?
- ◆ What's the maximum number of days for drinking you will choose to give yourself?
- ◆ Use standard guidelines to determine what constitutes one drink:
  - 1 1/4 ounces of 80-proof spirits; 4 ounces of wine; 10 ounces of beer with 5% alcohol ("ice" beer and many "microbrews"); 12 ounces of beer with 4% alcohol (standard beer)



## Count your drinks and monitor your drinking behavior

- ◆ Try it! Most people are surprised by what they learn when they actually count how much they drink
- ◆ Simply observe your behavior—this is like standing outside yourself and watching how you are acting when you are drinking

## Alter how and what you drink

- ◆ Switch to drinks that contain less alcohol (e.g. light beers)
- ◆ Slow down your pace of drinking
- ◆ Space drinks further apart
- ◆ Alternate drinking nonalcoholic beverages with alcoholic drinks

## Manage your drinking in the moment

- ◆ Stay aware and on top of how you drink and what you're drinking when you're at a party
- ◆ Choose what's right for you

Adapted from *Brief Alcohol Screening and Intervention for College Students* (1999)

## FIND HELP RETHINKING YOUR DRINKING

- ◆ Mental Health Services at the Colonial Health Center offers *individual* and *group* counseling, discussions series topics and other services related to substance use
  - ◆ To access services, come in or call us at 202-994-5300
  - ◆ We variably offer group and individual therapy for those experiencing challenges related to substance use; for a list of current groups being offered, please visit our website at [healthcenter.gwu.edu/group-counseling](http://healthcenter.gwu.edu/group-counseling)
- ◆ There are many online resources geared towards helping individuals dealing with drinking; the following websites are among those that provide helpful resources:
  - ◆ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)
  - ◆ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) - College Aim [www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)