

Holiday Celebrations and Alcohol - Be Prepared!

Holidays, traditionally thought of as a time for grand celebration, can be especially difficult and painful for those individuals and families struggling with substance abuse and mental health disorders. It is important to develop strategies to assist with combating holiday stress, remaining safe, and keeping healthy. Please keep the following helpful hints in mind:

- ✓ Stay in contact with close friends and family. Having positive, supportive people in your life can evoke a sense of hope and can help to sort things out.
- ✓ Set limits - If you are feeling vulnerable (overwhelmed, angry, tired, sad, etc.), go to an event late and leave early.
- ✓ Set boundaries - Stay away from those people, places, and things that bring you harm. Just because everyone else is drinking doesn't mean you have to drink.
- ✓ Be conscious of media messages that depict alcohol as relaxing and fun. Be aware that alcohol is a depressant drug. Taking in more alcohol than your body can handle slows down breathing and heart rate.
- ✓ Watch mixing medication with alcohol. Many people don't realize that drinking while taking prescription medication can increase the effect of alcohol. So, instead of having one drink, your body may react like it has had twice as many.
- ✓ Know the facts about alcohol - Alcohol affects each person uniquely, and it can have a different effect each time you drink.
- ✓ Older people become intoxicated more quickly than younger people. As we age, our bodies slow down, as well as our ability to metabolize alcohol.
- ✓ Women can become intoxicated more easily than men. Women's ability to metabolize alcohol is affected by body mass, hormonal levels, and liver enzymes.
- ✓ Alcohol metabolism is directly influenced by the amount of body mass and water we have in our system. The less you weigh, the more intoxicated you will become.
- ✓ Don't drink and drive - Even one drink can affect reaction time, concentration, and motor coordination. Even though you may think you are driving safely, alcohol prevents you from using good judgment and making quick decisions.
- ✓ It takes approximately one hour to metabolize a standard drink. A standard drink is considered a 12 oz. beer, a 5 oz. glass of wine, or a drink with 1½ oz of hard liquor. Drink per drink, each beverage contains the same amount of concentrated alcohol.
- ✓ Don't drink on an empty stomach - Food slows down the rate the body can absorb alcohol. However, eating or drinking coffee after a night of heavy drinking will not speed up absorption.

Presented by the New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Addiction Services

This flyer is for informational purposes only. If you are in need of addiction services, please contact the Addictions Hotline of New Jersey at 1-800-238-2333.