

How Much is Too Much Alcohol?

Heavy drinking and binge drinking among military members exceeds the rates experienced in the civilian sector across all age groups. The rates for male military members aged 18 to 25 provide the widest discrepancy from civilian rates: 28.7% versus 19.7%. The levels of heavy drinking have also seen an increase since 2002. A recent study in *Military Medicine*, gives us insight into three drinking patterns as described by military personnel:

Social Drinkers—If you fit into this category, you will tend to drink only in social situations when the purpose of the get together is to celebrate, catch up with peers, connect with others, and to create social bonds. These drinkers often plan ahead and designate a driver so that the group members do not get DUI's.

Recreational Drinkers—This category of drinker usually drinks for the purpose of relieving boredom. Generally, this happens on bases and in social circles where there is an identified lack of activities and drinking seems to fill in the gap. These drinkers tend to 'hang out', the drinking episodes are far more spontaneous, and there may be no identified designated driver, so the risk of DUI can increase.

Stress and Coping Drinkers—Those who fit in this category usually utilize alcohol to cope with jobs that they perceive are too stressful. Members who use alcohol regularly to help them sleep due to shift work or right before/after a deployment, may also fit in this group. This subcategory has members who are more likely to drink alone than the other two groups and were most likely to be perceived of as 'problem drinkers' by their peers.

In looking at the categories above, determine the group with which you most closely identify. Understanding your emotional relationship with alcohol is important in recognizing if drinking is becoming a problem. A simple rule used on many active duty bases is **0-0-1-3**: 0 = Zero drinks before age 21; 0 = Zero DUI's; 1 = One drink per hour; 3 = Three drinks per social event.

If you have any additional questions or need assistance, please contact your 107th Wing Director of Psychological Health, Dr. Roger A. De Noyelles, LCSW-R. Bldg. # 202 (CE Bldg); Office 100. Mobile: 716-534-4209, Email: roger.denoyelles.ctr@ang.af.mil

References

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