Introductory Video: Alcohol and Personal Responsibility

Chapter 10: Alcohol

Section 1: Alcohol Affects the Body

Key Terms:
- **alcohol**: the drug in wine, beer, and liquor that causes intoxication
- **intoxication**: the physical and mental changes produced by drinking alcohol
- **blood alcohol concentration (BAC)**: the amount of alcohol in a person's blood, expressed as a percentage
- **binge drinking**: the act of drinking five or more drinks in one sitting
- **Cirrhosis**: a deadly disease that replaces healthy liver tissue with scar tissue; most often caused by long-term alcohol abuse

Alcohol is a Drug

- Considered a drug because it causes a change in a person’s physical and emotional state (called intoxication)
- All forms of alcohol are dangerous

Short-Term Effects of Alcohol

- Short-term effects depend on
Effects on the Body

- Alcohol enters the stomach and is absorbed into the bloodstream and carried throughout the body
- Short term effects:
  - Alcohol irritates the mouth, throat, esophagus, stomach (feel nauseated / vomit)
  - Alcohol makes the heart work harder (alcohol dilates-widens-blood vessels; heart works harder to pump blood through vessels)
  - Alcohol makes the body lose heat (blood vessels in skin wide, person feels warm/flushed—even though they may not be)
  - Alcohol causes the liver to work harder (liver breaks down toxic substances to neutralize poisonous effects; liver can only do 1 drink per hour)
  - Alcohol causes dehydration (breaking down alcohol requires water, so kidneys produce more urine—this water is pulled from throughout the body—including the brain; **hangover** (set of uncomfortable physical effects that are caused by excessive alcohol use—e.g. headache, nausea, dizziness) is a result of dehydration)

Effects on the Mind

- Alcohol slows down the nervous system
- After 2 drinks, drinker
  - loses the ability to make good decisions, pay attention, follow complex thoughts, cope with difficult situations
  - loses **inhibitions** (the natural limits that people put on their behavior)
- after a few more drinks, drinker
  - loses the ability to focus eyes
  - slurs speech
  - loses coordination
  - experiences drastic mood swings
  - loses judgment
  - may do things they’d never do sober (e.g. sexually aggressive)

Effects at Different Blood Alcohol Concentrations

- **BAC** – amount of alcohol in a person’s blood, expressed as a percentage
• 0.08 is the legal limit for driving under the influence of alcohol (DUI); but a BAC of 0.02 can still affect person’s ability to drive

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*A 12-ounce beer, a 6-ounce glass of wine, and a 1.75-ounce glass of whiskey each qualify as one drink and have the same alcohol content.

The Dangers of Binge Drinking
• Binge drinking – the act of drinking 5 or more drinks in one sitting
  o A person can drink a fatal amount before the effects of intoxication set in
• For most people, 8 drinks or more in an hour causes breathing and heart rate to struggle—they may stop working (called **alcohol poisoning** or **alcohol overdose**)
  o Symptoms: extreme vomiting, loss of consciousness, slowed breathing
  o If a person passes out from drinking alcohol, get medical help immediately, turn victim on side (in case they vomit when they’re unconscious, so they don’t choke); if not breathing, start CPR

Long-Term Effects of Alcohol
• you do not have to be an alcoholic to suffer the long-term effects of alcohol

Permanent Damage to the Body
• damages the heart
  o irregular heartbeat
• high blood pressure (hypertension)
• enlargement of heart
• anemia (decrease in red blood cells or hemoglobin); red blood cells carry oxygen to the body

• damages the liver
  • hepatitis (inflammation of the liver)
  • liver cancer
  • cirrhosis (a disease that replaces healthy liver tissue with scar tissue and is usually caused by long-term alcohol use) – 12th leading cause of death in the US; ½ due to chronic alcohol abuse

• damages esophagus and stomach
  • irritation / bleeding of stomach lining
  • cancer of the mouth, esophagus, stomach

• damages small intestine
  • makes absorbing vitamins / minerals difficult
  • irritates the pancreas and may increase risk of pancreatic cancer
  • affects immune system – reduces body’s ability to fight disease

• too much strain on kidneys; loss of bladder control

Permanent Damage to the Brain
• permanent changes in brain due to cell death from repeated dehydration and lack of oxygen
• alcoholism is the 2nd leading cause of dementia in the US
  • dementia – a decrease in brain function that includes personality changes and memory loss

Section 2: Alcoholism Affects the Family and Society

Key Terms:
• alcohol abuse: drinking too much alcohol, drinking it too often, or drinking it at inappropriate times
• alcoholism: a disease that causes a person to lose control of his or her drinking behavior; a physical and emotional addiction to alcohol
• enabling: helping an addict avoid the negative consequences of his or her behavior
• Codependency: a condition in which a family member or friend sacrifices his or her own needs to meet the needs of an addict
• Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS): a set of physical and mental defects that affect a fetus that has been exposed to alcohol because of the mother's consumption of alcohol during pregnancy

What is Alcoholism?
• Alcohol is the most widely used and abused drug in our society
• Alcohol abuse – drinking too much alcohol too often or at inappropriate times
• Alcoholism – a disease that causes a person to lose control of his or her drinking behavior
  o Physically and emotionally addicted to alcohol
  o Don’t just crave, they suffer painful physical symptoms when they do not have alcohol

Alcoholism Develops in Stages
• Alcoholism develops over time (similar to drug addiction)
• Stages
  o (1) problem drinking – experimentation; no one ever wants to become an alcoholic; moves to regular pattern of drinking; drinks to avoid boredom, escape anxiety, relieve stress, cope with depression
    ▪ social drinking – drinking alcohol as part of a social situation (e.g. date or party)
    ▪ don’t drink alone
    ▪ don’t drink to get drunk
  o (2) tolerance – develops after repeated drinking when the user finds that it takes more alcohol to feel the same effect felt when first drinking alcohol
    ▪ Drinking and recovering take up most time; family, friends, work, schoolwork, is neglected
    ▪ Drinkers become secretive, paranoid, defensive to hide behavior
  o (3) dependence – drinker’s body begins to need alcohol to function normally (called physical dependence); without alcohol, drinker experiences withdrawal (e.g. anxiety, sweating, shaking, nausea)
  o (4) alcoholism – drinker is addicted to alcohol; craves alcohol and cannot control drinking; drinks and gets drunk more frequently; alcohol is put before everything else; substitute alcohol for food
Risk Factors for Alcoholism

Alcoholism probably results from a combination of psychological, environmental, behavioral, physical factors.

- **Age**
  - Teens who start drinking before age 15 are 4x more likely to become alcoholics than people who wait until 21.
  - Brains are vulnerable when you’re young.

- **Social environment** – hanging out w/ friends who drink increase the chances a person will drink (e.g. peer pressure, persuasive advertising, desire to fit in).

- **Genetics** – alcoholism tends to run in families.
  - Male children of alcoholic fathers have a 25% risk of becoming alcoholics; children of non-alcoholics have 7-9% risk.

- **Risk-taking personality** – people who are impulsive, like novelty, enjoy taking risks have a greater chance of becoming alcoholics.

*Risk factors may increase the chance, but don’t determine your future!*

Warning Signs of Alcoholism

- Alcohol is becoming increasingly important part of a person’s life.
- Alcohol is used to deal with anger, disappointment, frustration.
- Drinker has hard time putting limits on drinking (hard to NOT have another drink).
- Uncomfortable around friends who don’t drink.
- Personal / professional relationships suffer—adding additional stress.
- Battle feelings of depression or hopelessness (may talk about suicide).
- Most drinkers can’t recognize symptoms themselves; denial – inability to see symptoms; significant component of addictions; friends, family, legal courts need to step in to stop addiction.

Alcoholism Affects the Family

- **Family members may have guilty feelings** – like the alcoholism of a loved one is somehow their fault.
- **Unpredictable behavior** – families never know what to expect; alcoholic may be depressed in the morning, happy in afternoon, angry at night.
- **Violence** – families of alcoholics are more likely to become victims of violence than families of non-alcoholics.
- **Neglect and isolation** – alcoholics usually spend their time preoccupied with drinking; children feel that parent doesn’t have time for them.
• Protecting the alcoholic – family, friends, employers sometimes enable the alcoholic (helping an addict avoid the negative consequences of his/her behavior)

• Ignoring one’s own needs – codependency is the condition in which a family member or friend sacrifices his or her own needs to meet the needs of an addict

Families of Teen Alcoholics
• Teens who drink hurt their families
• They get alcohol illegally
• Lie to their families to avoid getting caught
• Often become angry or abusive when confronted about their problem

Alcohol and Pregnancy
• Alcoholism is so difficult to overcome that alcoholics who become pregnant find it difficult to stop drinking

• Heavy drinking during pregnancy can lead to fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) – set of physical and mental defects that affect a fetus that has been exposed to alcohol because of the mother’s consumption of alcohol during her pregnancy
  o Physical deformities
  o Mental retardation
  o Some need care for the rest of their lives
  o FAS is the leading preventable cause of mental retardation in our country

Alcoholism Affects Society
• Alcohol abuse often leads to car wrecks, drowning, other accidents that kill or injure both drinkers and nondrinkers

• Many cases of murder, family violence, child abuse, rape, assault are attributed to alcohol-related violence

• Alcoholism leads to the destruction of the family
• Takes away $$ and resources from society
  o e.g. drinkers get sick more often than nondrinkers
  o alcoholism leads to missing days of work
  o moneys pent on treating alcohol-related illnesses
  o money spent to cover losses due to alcohol-related crime

Alcoholism Can be Treated

Treatment Programs
• alcoholics should participate in some form of treatment
• helps alcoholics endure stages of withdrawal (e.g. extreme nervousness, headaches, chills, nausea, seizures, uncontrollable shaking)
• **inpatient** – provide a sheltered place to go through withdrawal while getting counseling
• **outpatient care** – Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) – most widely used program for treating alcoholism; involves 12 steps and regular meetings / sharing experiences; replaces alcohol with other things that are emotionally, physically, socially, spiritually fulfilling

**Al-Anon and Alateen**
• provide treatment and support to families of alcoholics
• **al-anon** – designed to help family members talk about and share advice on the problem of living with an alcoholic
• **alateen** – helps teens cope with living with an alcoholic

**Section 3: Teens and Alcohol**

**Key Terms:**
• **designated driver:** a person who chooses not to drink alcohol in a social setting so that he or she can safely drive himself or herself and others

**Drinking and Driving, a Deadly Combination**
• #1 cause of death among teens is car accidents; most are alcohol related
• Alcohol impairs skills needed for driving
  - Slows reaction time
  - Affects vision
  - Makes you feel drowsy
  - Reduces coordination
  - Affects judgment
• 513,000 people in US injured in alcohol-related car accidents each year
• 3 in 10 people in the US will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some point in their lives
• Drunk driving is the nation’s most frequently committed violent crime

**Drinking, Driving, and the Law**
• Alcohol is illegal for people under 21
• Driving with 0.08 BAC or higher will be arrested for driving under the influence (DUI)
• Driving with 0.10 BAC will be arrested for driving while intoxicated (DWI)

**Zero Tolerance**
• Zero tolerance – it is illegal for anyone under 21 to drive with any amount of alcohol in their systems
  - Loss of driver’s license, expensive fines, community service
• Adults – penalties are arrest, heavy fines, suspension of driver’s license, jail time

**Getting Home Safe and Sober**
• **Don’t drink** – resist pressure to drink
• **Plan ahead** – plan a safe way home; be a designated driver (or plan one) – a person who chooses not to drink so that she/he can get everyone home safely
• **Have an arrangement with your parents or guardian to pick you up if you need a safe ride home** –
• **Call a cab** – it’s worth a cab fare to live to see tomorrow
• If a friend is going to drink and drive, take their keys—they’ll thank you later
• Every day, 8 teens die in alcohol-related car crashes in the US

**Drinking Puts Your Future at Risk**

**Drinking and Jail**
• **Minor in possession (MIP)** – if an underage person is caught with alcohol
• **Public intoxication (PI)** – if you’re in public
• **Having a fake ID**
• You’ll have a police record / criminal record; make it difficult to get a job or get into college

**Drinking and Sexual Activity**
• Alcohol makes it hard to think clearly
• a person may participate in unplanned sexual activity
  o leading to unplanned pregnancy, STD, unhealthy sexual relationship
• alcohol is also the most common drug associated with date rape
• **by choosing not to drink, you’ll stay in control of your mind and body**

**Drinking and Diving**
• alcohol plays a role in more than 38% of all drowning accidents in the US
• driving under the influence of alcohol can lead to head and neck injury, brain damage, spinal cord injury, paralysis

**Drinking and Teen Brains**
• alcohol affects the development of the brain
• effects of alcohol are much more potent in brains that are still rapidly developing (e.g. brains of teens)
• changes that alcohol causes in young brains greatly increases the risk of alcoholism

**Saying No to Alcohol**
• peer pressure is the most common reason teens start drinking
• pressure to drink from advertising, TV, movies
• teens usually aren’t pressured directly

**Don’t Set Yourself Up**
• most effective way to avoid alcohol is to stay away from people who drink and places where others are drinking

**Practice saying No**
buy yourself time – find a place where you can be alone to think about what you can do to get out of the situation

give good reasons why you choose not to drink –

state the consequences that could result if you do drink –
say no firmly – say no clearly and look the other person in the eye while you’re talking

if necessary, say no again and include an alternate activity –

walk away – friends who don’t respect your values and opinions aren’t true friends anyway; offer your friends the opportunity to join you

Joining the Fight Against Drunk Driving

• MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)
  o Promote stricter penalties for people who drive drunk

• SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving)
  o Addresses underage drinking, impaired driving, drug use, other destructive decisions and killers of young people

Web Resources:

Michigan Department of Community Health

Helping Someone Stop Drinking

Addiction Recovery Program

Signs of Addiction