

ALCOHOL AND DEPRESSION

Depressive disorders are characterized by sadness, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration and **can be long-lasting or recurrent, substantially impairing an individual's ability to function at work or school or cope with daily life.** Depressive disorders may result in suicide.

FACT :

Alcohol consumption has a complex relationship with depressive disorders. Alcohol use can worsen depressive symptoms and lead to depression, and depression can lead to increased alcohol use.

What is the problem with drinking to cope with depression?



- **Alcohol is a depressant substance** that slows down the parts of your brain that affect your thinking, behavior, breathing, and heart rate and can worsen feelings of depression.



- **Regular alcohol use changes the chemistry of the brain**, including a reduction of the neurotransmitter serotonin, a brain chemical implicated in depression. The more you drink, the more symptoms of depression you may have.



- **Drinking to cope with untreated depressive feelings, or "self-medicating,"** may lead to increased drinking and the risk of alcohol use disorders.



- **Increased alcohol use can also affect personal, family, and social relationships and work life**, which can contribute to depression as well.



- **The rate of suicide among people who are dependent on alcohol is six times that of the general population.**



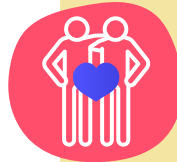
- The presence of alcohol use disorders at least **doubles the risk of having depression.**



RECOMMENDATIONS



If you are feeling depressed, avoid alcohol consumption, and seek help. Discuss your drinking with a health professional, as it may interfere with overcoming depression.



If you think you are drinking too much, seek help to drink less or quit altogether. Ask for an assessment of any depressive feelings or other negative emotions that may need to be treated as well. Don't wait to seek help.



Both alcohol use disorders and depression are treatable. A trained health professional will be able to conduct an assessment and may recommend a combination of psychosocial therapy and medication. It is important to discuss treatment options with health professionals so that both conditions can be managed well.

Sources:

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World Health Organization, Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP). mhGAP intervention guide for mental, neurological and substance use disorders in non-specialized health settings – version 2.0 [Internet]. Geneva: WHO; 2016 [cited 2021 Sep 23]. Available from: <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241549790>.

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