

HOW ALCOHOL & SUBSTANCE ABUSE AFFECT WOMEN

FACT SHEET

Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Abuse Clearinghouse

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Women and girls have different reactions to alcohol and other drugs. They metabolize these substances differently from men and the emotional, psychological and social factors can impact women harder. The stigma women face, family responsibilities, and the high incidence of co-occurring trauma often delay women from getting the help they need. The facts may surprise you!

- 1. Are you aware that the death rate from alcoholism is 50 to 100% higher for women?** (Sullivan, Fama & Rosenbloom & Pfefferbaum, 2002)
 - Alcohol is the third leading cause of death among women 35-45. (Alexander, 1997)
 - Women sustain liver damage and more physical consequences at smaller amounts and with shorter duration of use. (CASA, 1998, 2003; Willsnack & Wilsnack, 1994)
- 2. Did you know women are 48% more likely than men to abuse prescription medications?** (NIDA, 1999)
 - Nine out of ten older women who went to doctors with classic symptoms of alcoholism were misdiagnosed as depressed. (CASA, 1998)
 - From 1995-1999, there was a 43% increase in the number of women over 55 seeking treatment for illicit drug use. (DASIS, 2001)
- 3. Does it surprise you that up to 70% of addicted girls report having been sexually abused before the age of sixteen?** (NIDA, 1994)
 - Studies reveal up to 89% of women seeking alcohol and other drug treatment report a lifetime history of sexual or physical abuse. (Clark, 2001)
 - Up to 80% of women with alcohol and other drug disorders have been victims of domestic violence. (Research Institute on Addictions, 1997)
- 4. Do you know young girls have the most rapidly increasing rate of alcohol and drug abuse?** (Alexander, 1997; ODJJP, 1996)
 - Girls move more quickly from experimentation to addiction. (CASA, 2003)
 - Rates of use and abuse are contributing to rise in girls while they decrease or remain stable for boys. (CASA, 2003; ODJJP, 1997)
- 5. Do you realize that 80% of addicted girls had at least one addicted parent?**¹ (NIDA, 1999)
 - Risk factors for girls differ significantly and include control of food and weight; drinking and using to hold on to a relationship; a history of violent or sexual victimization; early puberty; and frequent moving. (CASA, 2003)

*This information has been prepared by the NH Task Force on Women and Addictions.
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