

Alcohol: When is it a problem?

Patterns of alcohol use can change over the course of a lifetime or even over a semester. Deciding if your patterns of alcohol use are problematic can sometimes feel difficult. One way to conceptualize alcohol use is to think of it as behavior falling on a continuum. Where would you place yourself on the continuum below? If you have trouble placing yourself, consider asking a trusted friend to locate where they feel your use lies.

Continuum of Use:

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|--------------------------|---|
| Abstinence | Complete non-use of a substance. |
| Non-Problem Use | Using in moderation; appropriate behavior when drinking. |
| Critical Incident | An isolated event; a single episode of a problem or harm. |
| Substance Abuse | Pattern of negative consequences (3+ in 6 months); using despite knowledge that use causes or contributes to problems; moderation is still possible. |
| Dependency | Tolerance; periodic loss of control of quantity and/or behavior; important activities reduced or given up because of use; use criticized by family members/friends; moderation difficult or impossible. |

Reflecting on Your Drinking:

Another way to help determine whether your use is problematic is to consider what consequences you have experienced due to alcohol use. Have you experienced any of the following in the past six months?

- Felt guilty about how often or how much you drink
- Did or said something you later regretted or that caused you to feel shame or embarrassment
- Missed a class, got behind in school work, or otherwise felt unable to do your schoolwork
- Spent more money on alcohol than you wanted to
- Noticed your relationships have been negatively affected for alcohol-related reasons
- Had difficulty fulfilling school, work, or social responsibilities
- Felt nauseous, got sick/vomited, had a headache or hangover the next day
- Had difficulty remembering all or part of the time in which you were intoxicated
- Needed medical attention/treatment

If you're concerned about consequences of your use, there are many resources available to you both on and off-campus. A good place to start exploring on your own is the Online Anonymous Alcohol Self-Assessment.

Online & Off-Campus Resources

Columbia Health: health.columbia.edu

Go Ask Alice!: goaskalice.columbia.edu

Online Anonymous Alcohol Self-Assessment:
health.columbia.edu/alcohol

Addiction Services Helpline: 877-8 HOPE NY (877-846-7369)

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Columbia Health

On-Campus Resources

Brief Alcohol & Drug Screening and Intervention for Columbia Students (BASICS):

health.columbia.edu/alcohol or 212-854-5453

Counseling & Psychological Services: 212-854-2878

Medical Services: 212-854-7426

Columbia University – Emergency Medical Services (CU-EMS)/Public Safety: 212-854-5555

www.health.columbia.edu

212-854-2284