

Binge Drinking

[Narrator] Today, more than half of the alcohol consumed by adults in the U.S. occurs during a pattern of behavior known as binge drinking – a risky behavior that can lead to illness . . . injury . . . and even death.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking as consumption that raises blood alcohol content to .08 percent . . . the cut-off point for driving while impaired in all 50 states.

[Dr. Brewer] Binge drinking is an extremely dangerous pattern of alcohol consumption, which is defined as four or more drinks per occasion for a woman, five or more drinks per occasion for a man.

[Dr. Jernigan] ...and we estimate that there are approximately 1.5 billion episodes of binge drinking in the U.S. each year.

[Narrator] Binge drinking literally fuels dangerous behavior. Binge drinkers are 14 times more likely to report driving drunk than non-binge drinkers.

[Dr. Jernigan] Eighty eight percent of impaired driving events are caused by binge drinkers.

[Dr. Brewer] Binge drinking is associated with over half of the 79 thousand alcohol-attributable deaths that we estimate occur in the United States each year.

[Narrator] Though many doctors consider binge drinking to be a dangerous health behavior, many Americans think that binge drinking is socially-acceptable.

[Dr. Jernigan] Alcohol's the most widely available drug and intoxicant in our society.

[Narrator] This dangerous pattern of over-consumption contributes to illness, injury and death through car crashes, violence, HIV/AIDS, and more.

[Dr. Brewer] Binge drinking is also associated with a wide range of health and social problems, including unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, interpersonal violence, and the list goes on and on.

[Narrator] The truth is that most binge drinkers are adults who drink too much on occasion.

[Dr. Brewer] We estimate that about 70 percent of the 1.5 billion episodes of binge drinking that occur in the United States each year involve people that are 26 years and older.

[Dr. Jernigan] The majority of, problems, of alcohol problems are caused by people who think they're not problem drinkers.

[Dr. Brewer] There's good scientific evidence that over eighty percent of binge drinkers are not alcohol-dependent or alcoholics.

[Narrator] Unlike other high-risk health behaviors, the risk of binge drinking goes up with socio-economic status.

[Dr. Jernigan] In fact, binge drinkers most commonly make more than fifty thousand dollars a year. Binge drinking is a problem for individuals, but it's a problem that is engendered by community environments that are supportive of this behavior.

[Dr. Brewer] We need to implement effective community-based strategies to prevent binge drinking.

[Dr. Jernigan] The single most effective thing we could do to reduce binge drinking would be to increase alcohol taxes.

[Dr. Brewer] So too is reducing the number of places where people can purchase alcohol in the community.

[Dr. Jernigan] Reducing days and hours of sales is another important strategy.

[Narrator] Communities need to create an environment that discourages underage and binge drinking.

[Dr. Brewer] We need to maintain and also enforce the age 21 minimum legal drinking age.

[Narrator] Armed with these strategies, communities can begin to fight back against the proliferation of alcohol outlets, advertising, and drink specials.

[Dr. Brewer] We need to de-normalize binge drinking as a pattern of alcohol consumption.

[Dr. Jernigan] It is far too risky and harmful a pattern of drinking.

[Narrator] Binge drinking. It's a clear health threat for the drinker...and for society. Be responsible to your family, your community and yourself. Don't binge drink.