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Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

Also called: Alcohol Abuse, Alcohol dependence, Alcoholism

What is alcohol use disorder (AUD)?

For most adults, moderate alcohol [<https://medlineplus.gov/alcohol.html>] use is probably not harmful. Your risk of developing an alcohol use disorder (AUD) depends on how much, how often, and how quickly you drink alcohol. Alcohol misuse means that drinking causes distress and harm. Over time alcohol misuse can increase your risk of AUD.

AUD can range from mild to severe, depending on the symptoms. Severe AUD is sometimes called alcoholism or alcohol dependence.

AUD is a disease that causes:

- Craving - a strong need to drink
- Loss of control - not being able to stop drinking once you've started
- Negative emotional state - feeling anxious and irritable when you are not drinking

What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking is a type of alcohol misuse. It means drinking so much at once that your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level is 0.08% or more. For a man, this usually happens after having 5 or more drinks within a few hours. For a woman, it is after about 4 or more drinks within a few hours. Not everyone who binge drinks has an AUD, but they are at higher risk for getting one.

What are the dangers of too much alcohol?

Too much alcohol is dangerous. Heavy drinking can increase the risk of certain cancers. It may lead to liver diseases [<https://medlineplus.gov/liverdiseases.html>], such as fatty liver disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/fattyliverdisease.html>] and cirrhosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/cirrhosis.html>]. It can also cause damage to the brain and other organs. Drinking during pregnancy can harm your fetus [<https://medlineplus.gov/fetalalcoholspectrumdisorders.html>]. Alcohol also increases the risk of death from car crashes, injuries, homicide, and suicide.

How do I know if I have an alcohol use disorder (AUD)?

You may have an AUD if you can answer yes to two or more of these questions:

In the past year, have you:

- Ended up drinking more or for a longer time than you had planned to?
- Wanted to cut down or stop drinking, or tried to, but couldn't?
- Spent a lot of your time drinking or recovering from drinking?
- Felt a strong need to drink?
- Found that drinking - or being sick from drinking - often interfered with your family life, job, or school?
- Kept drinking even though it was causing trouble with your family or friends?
- Given up or cut back on activities that you enjoyed just so you could drink?

- Gotten into dangerous situations while drinking or after drinking? Some examples are driving drunk and having unsafe sex.
- Kept drinking even though it was making you feel depressed or anxious? Or when it was adding to another health problem?
- Had to drink more and more to feel the effects of the alcohol?
- Had withdrawal symptoms when the alcohol was wearing off? They include trouble sleeping, shakiness, irritability, anxiety [<https://medlineplus.gov/anxiety.html>] , depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html>] , restlessness, nausea [<https://medlineplus.gov/nauseaandvomiting.html>] , and sweating [<https://medlineplus.gov/sweat.html>] . In severe cases, you could have a fever [<https://medlineplus.gov/fever.html>] , seizures [<https://medlineplus.gov/seizures.html>] , or hallucinations.

If you have any of these symptoms, your drinking may already be a cause for concern. The more symptoms you have, the more serious the problem is.

What should I do if I think that I might have an alcohol use disorder (AUD)?

If you think you might have an AUD, see your health care provider for an evaluation. Your provider can help make a treatment plan [<https://medlineplus.gov/alcoholusedisorderaudtreatment.html>] , prescribe medicines, and if needed, give you treatment referrals.

NIH: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

Start Here

- How Many Is Too Many? When Drinking Becomes a Problem [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2022/10/how-many-too-many>]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/cuanto-alcohol-es-demasiado>]
- Rethinking Drinking: Questions and Answers [<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/questions-answers>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
- Understanding Alcohol Use Disorder [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/understanding-alcohol-use-disorder>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/comprehension-del-trastorno-por-consumo-de-alcohol>]

Symptoms

- What Are Symptoms of Alcohol Use Disorder? [<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/how-much-too-much/what-are-symptoms-alcohol-use-disorder-aud>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Alcohol Use Screening Tests [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/alcohol-use-screening-tests/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/evaluacion-del-consumo-de-alcohol/>]
- Blood Alcohol Level [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/blood-alcohol-level/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-alcohol-en-la-sangre/>]
- Gamma-glutamyl Transferase (GGT) Test [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/gamma-glutamyl-transferase-ggt-test/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/prueba-de-gamma-glutamil-transferasa-ggt/>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Understanding Alcohol Drinking Patterns [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/alcohol-drinking-patterns>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/definicion-de-niveles-y-patrones-de-consumo-de-alcohol>]

Treatments and Therapies

- Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) Treatment: MedlinePlus Health Topic [https://medlineplus.gov/alcoholusedisorderauditment.html]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/alcoholusedisorderauditment.html]
- NIAAA Alcohol Treatment Navigator [https://alcoholtreatment.niaaa.nih.gov/]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)

Living With

- Children of Alcoholics [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Children-Of-Alcoholics-017.aspx] (American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry)
Also in Spanish [https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Spanish/Los-Hijos-de-Alcoholicos-017.aspx]
- Intervention: Help a Loved One Overcome Addiction [https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/intervention/ART-20047451?p=1] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/mental-illness/in-depth/intervention/art-20047451?p=1]
- Support Strategies for Quitting [https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/thinking-about-change/support-strategies-quitting]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
- Taking Medicines Safely after Alcohol or Drug Abuse Recovery [https://familydoctor.org/taking-medicines-safely-after-alcohol-or-drug-abuse-recovery/?adfree=true] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [https://es.familydoctor.org/medicacion-segura-despues-del-abuso-de-alcohol-o-drogas/?adfree=true]

Related Issues

- Alcohol Associated Liver Disease [https://liverfoundation.org/resource-center/videos/alcohol-related-liver-disease/]  (American Liver Foundation)
- Alcohol Poisoning [https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alcohol-poisoning/symptoms-causes/syc-20354386?p=1] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/alcohol-poisoning/symptoms-causes/syc-20354386?p=1]
- Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome [https://familydoctor.org/alcohol-withdrawal-syndrome/?adfree=true] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [https://es.familydoctor.org/sindrome-de-abstinencia-del-alcohol/?adfree=true]
- Alcohol's Effects on the Body [https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/alcohols-effects-body]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
Also in Spanish [https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/los-efectos-del-consumo-de-alcohol-en-el-cuerpo]
- Alcohol-Related Blackouts [https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2024/02/alcohol-related-blackouts]  (National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/lagunas-mentales-relacionadas-con-el-consumo-de-bebidas]
- Drink Less, Be Your Best [https://www.cdc.gov/drink-less-be-your-best/] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- PTSD and Problems with Alcohol Use [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/related/problem_alcohol_use.asp] (National Center for PTSD)
- Smoking Cessation in Recovering Alcoholics [https://familydoctor.org/smoking-cessation-in-recovering-alcoholics/?adfree=true] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [https://es.familydoctor.org/como-abandonar-el-habito-de-fumar-en-el-caso-de-personas-alcoholicas-en-recuperacion/?adfree=true]
- Wernicke-Korsakoff Syndrome [https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/wernicke-korsakoff-syndrome]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
Also in Spanish [https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/brochures-and-fact-sheets/el-sindrome-de-wernicke-korsakoff]

Genetics

- Alcohol use disorder: MedlinePlus Genetics [https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/alcohol-use-disorder]  (National Library of Medicine)

Health Check Tools

- Calculators [<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/calculators>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
- Worksheets and More [<https://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/worksheets-more>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)

Statistics and Research

- Alcohol Facts and Statistics [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/alcohol-topics/alcohol-facts-and-statistics>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohols-effects-health/alcohol-topics/datos-y-estadisticas-sobre-el-alcohol>]

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Alcohol+Use+Disorder%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Binge Drinking [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Binge+Drinking%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Concurrent Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Alcohol Use Disorder in... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40663349>]
- Article: Aversion-resistant alcohol seeking in the human laboratory. [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40618299>]
- Article: Individual stress reactivity predicts alcohol craving and alcohol consumption in alcohol... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40610438>]
- Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Alcoholism%22%5Bmajr%3Anoexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bedat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+free+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- FindTreatment.gov [<https://findtreatment.gov/>] (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://findtreatment.gov/es>]
- Getting Help [<https://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov/specialfeatures/gettinghelp.aspx>]  (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism)
- National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [<https://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>] 

Teenagers

- Coping When a Parent Has an Alcohol or Drug Problem [<https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/coping-alcoholic.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/teens/coping-alcoholic.html>]

Older Adults

- Facts about Aging and Alcohol [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alcohol-misuse-or-alcohol-use-disorder/facts-about-aging-and-alcohol>]  (National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/alcohol/datos-factuales-sobre-envejecimiento-alcohol>]

Patient Handouts

- Alcohol use disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000944.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000944.htm>]
- Alcohol withdrawal [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000764.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000764.htm>]
- Alcoholic ketoacidosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000323.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000323.htm>]
- Alcoholic liver disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000281.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000281.htm>]
- Alcoholic neuropathy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000714.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000714.htm>]
- Deciding to quit drinking alcohol [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000523.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000523.htm>]
- Health risks of alcohol use [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000494.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000494.htm>]
- Helping a loved one with a drinking problem [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000815.htm>]
(Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000815.htm>]
- When you are drinking too much - tips for cutting back [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000503.htm>]
(Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000503.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Alcohol use disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000944.htm>]
- Alcohol withdrawal [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000764.htm>]
- Alcoholic ketoacidosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000323.htm>]
- Alcoholic liver disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000281.htm>]
- Alcoholic neuropathy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000714.htm>]
- Beriberi [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000339.htm>]
- Deciding to quit drinking alcohol [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000523.htm>]
- Delirium tremens [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000766.htm>]
- Health risks of alcohol use [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000494.htm>]
- Helping a loved one with a drinking problem [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000815.htm>]

How to stop drinking [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000857.htm>]

Ketones blood test [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003498.htm>]

Myths about drinking alcohol [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000856.htm>]

Osmotic demyelination syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000775.htm>]

Pellagra [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000342.htm>]

Substance use recovery and diet [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/002149.htm>]

Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000771.htm>]

When you are drinking too much - tips for cutting back [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000503.htm>]

Related Health Topics

Alcohol [<https://medlineplus.gov/alcohol.html>]

Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) Treatment [<https://medlineplus.gov/alcoholusedisorderaudtreatment.html>]

Cirrhosis [<https://medlineplus.gov/cirrhosis.html>]

Fatty Liver Disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/fattyliverdisease.html>]

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/fetalalcoholspectrumdisorders.html>]

Impaired Driving [<https://medlineplus.gov/impaireddriving.html>]

Underage Drinking [<https://medlineplus.gov/underagedrinking.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)* is the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism [<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/>]

NIH MedlinePlus Magazine

Better Way To Say That: Stigmatizing Language Affects How We Treat Addiction

[<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/a-better-way-to-say-that-stigmatizing-language-affects-how-we-treat-addiction>]

Confronting Alcohol Use Disorder and Misconceptions as a Woman

[<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/confronting-alcohol-use-disorder-and-misconceptions-as-a-woman>]

Substance Use Disorders: Get the Facts and Find Support [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/substance-use-disorders-get-the-facts-and-find-support>]

Tips for Supporting Loved Ones with Alcohol Use Disorders [<https://magazine.medlineplus.gov/article/tips-for-supporting-loved-ones-with-alcohol-use-disorders>]

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[<https://medlineplus.gov/criteria.html>].

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