

Alcohol and world health hunger

[Health & Medicine](#), [Drug Abuse](#)



Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and possibly one of the oldest known drugs. In America today, it is considered the number 1 drug problem.

Over \$90 billion is spent yearly by Americans on alcohol. At least \$100 million cost of healthcare and productivity loss affects the country's economy each year. According to statistics, there are more than 15 million alcohol-dependent Americans and half a million of this figure belongs to the age bracket of 9-12

Ethyl alcohol or ethanol is the major psychoactive component in alcoholic beverages. It is produced through the fermentation of sugar by yeast. The percentage of alcohol present in alcoholic beverages varies. Beer has 4-6% alcohol, wine has 7-15% alcohol, champagne has 8-14% alcohol, and distilled spirits have 40-95% alcohol (www.chemcases.com).

Due to its small size, molecules of alcohol are quickly absorbed by the intestines. It is also soluble in lipids and water solutions and it gets to the bloodstream easily and travels throughout the human body affecting almost all of the tissues.

Consumption of alcohol at moderate and high amounts impairs the functions of the central nervous system, acting on the spinal cord, reticular formation, on a number of neurotransmitter systems, and on the cerebellum and cerebral complex. The gravity of the impairment is dependent on the level of alcohol in the blood.

Alcohol has short-term and long-term effects. These effects are influenced by various factors such as gender, age, amount of food taken, physical condition and other drugs taken.

Alcohol radically impairs the judgment and coordination necessary to drive a car, even if it is taken at a small quantity. Moderate amount of alcohol can cause talkativeness and dizziness. Incidence of hostile acts like child abuse and domestic violence are also blamed to alcohol. Intake of larger amount of alcohol causes immediate nausea and vomiting, disturbed sleep, and slurred speech. Hangover – headache, dizziness, thirst, and fatigue – is also another effect of alcohol taken in large amounts.

The following illnesses are associated with long-term excessive alcohol consumption: high blood pressure and stroke, heart damage, cancers of the digestive system, liver damage, increasing risk of breast cancer, sexual impotence and reduced fertility, brain damage with mood/personality changes, sleeping difficulties, and concentration and memory problems (www.dassa.sa.gov.au).

Alcoholism or alcohol dependence is another major consequence of heavy and prolonged use of alcohol. This is a chronic disease from which a person craves for alcohol.

Despite the negative consequences that alcohol causes them, like marital problems, medical diseases, vehicular accidents, or loss of job, alcoholics cannot control their drinking.

These persons are also unable to stop drinking once started and they become physically dependent on it. Sudden cessation from a long period of

excessive alcohol intake results to withdrawal symptoms, including severe anxiety, nausea, tremors, sweating, convulsions and hallucinations. Alcoholics also develop a higher alcohol tolerance, that in order to reach intoxication, they need to drink in progressive amounts.

The prevalence of alcohol dependence is global and affects almost every aspects of the society. According to statistics, alcohol-dependent persons belong to homemakers, successful businessmen, laborers, skilled mechanics, and even church goers.

There are roughly 76 million people around the world who suffers from alcohol-related diseases. In the United States alone, more or less 15% of the population is suffering from alcohol-related problems. . It is to be noted that America is not yet in the list of the top 10 alcohol consuming countries: 1. Portugal, 2. Luxembourg, 3.) France, 4.) Hungary, 5.) Spain, 6.) Czech Republic, 7.) Denmark, 8.) Germany, 9.) Austria, and 10.) Switzerland (www.potsdam.edu).

Alcohol-related health issue is a worldwide concern. One major factor is the availability and legality of alcohol in almost every country. Despite its known health consequences, alcohol is readily available in almost every groceries and restaurants all around the world. Everyone has access to it, even the minors.

In Russia, alcohol dependence is significantly prevalent. Almost more than 30% of the country's deaths are alcohol abuse-related, directly and indirectly. The effort of the government to control alcohol manufacturing

seems futile due to the widespread black market for liquor created by the locals.

Countries, such as Japan, drinking is considered a requirement in business transactions, it is a mark of company loyalty. Refusing to accept a drink is regarded as an insult, especially if asked by the superior. Alcohol, not being regarded as a drug, is not of a moral issue in this country. In Tokyo alone, there are about 15, 000 bars which employees considered their office extensions.

The availability of alcohol is at a high rate with the vending machines dispensing sake and beer all over the country. Currently, there are more than 3 million alcohol dependent Japanese.