

The destructive growth of alcoholism in america

[Health & Medicine](#), [Alcoholism](#)



Drinking alcohol has become a past-time for teenagers and adults during weekends. People drink to relax, feel more confident or to forget temporarily any worries that they currently have. Everyone knows that alcohol in moderation do not harm one's body or society at large. The problem lies when drinking becomes uncontrollable and excessive. The social, health and mortality problems associated with alcohol have been perceived as early as 1920's, which was when the Temperance Movement started.

The consumption of alcohol began in 1600-1700. People drank alcohol because they had no other alternative. The milk was unpasteurized and the water was unsanitary. In addition, the price of tea and coffee did not fit the budget of most people. According to the article What in American's history could lead to prohibition, " the average American was drinking 7 gallons of pure alcohol. " During the early years of the American colony, drunkenness was not viewed as offensive.

The History of Alcohol article enumerated how people in the colonies " showed little concern over drunkenness, [in fact] spirituous liquors had become the greatest factors in colonial commerce. " Later on, the demand for alcohol created Saloons where people could drink and take part in different form of vices. The History of Alcohol article stated that "[i]t was not uncommon to find one saloon for every 150 or 200 Americans, including those who did not drink.

Hard-pressed to earn profits, saloon keepers sometimes introduced vices such as gambling and prostitution into their establishments in an attempt to earn profits. " However, people soon realized that alcohol drinkers acted differently and far worse after they have consumed liquor. Prohibition or <https://assignbuster.com/the-destructive-growth-of-alcoholism-in-america/>

temperance, which simply meant a “reduction or elimination of the use of alcoholic beverages,” was enacted to combat these “social ills” that were developing due to the effects of alcohol.

Hence, according to the History of Alcohol, “[i]n 1920 America saw prohibition in an effort to prevent the social problems caused by alcohol abuse.” Thornton, an economics professor, expressed that during 1920-1933, “national prohibition of alcohol [in the US was a] ‘noble experiment’- undertaken to reduce crime and corruption, solve social problems, reduce the tax burden created by prisons and poorhouses, and improve health and hygiene in America.” Supporters of the Temperance Movement firmly believed that alcohol had “addictive properties.

” In addition, the History of Alcohol stated that “the Temperance movement swept across the United States preaching that alcohol was immoral and destroyed family life.” The same article also says that the benevolent intentions of the Temperance Movement finally materialized when the government included the ban on alcohol in the 18th Amendment, which took away the business licenses of “brewers, distillers, vintners, and the wholesale and retail sellers,” of the Constitution. Despite genuine concern about the negative effects of alcohol, liquor cannot be eliminated from the market.

The History of Alcohol states that people started to bootleg alcohol from Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean- since Americans were prohibited from producing liquor- to cater to their growing customers. Organized crime was established to meet the increasing demand of the public for the prohibited product. According to the What in American's history could lead to <https://assignbuster.com/the-destructive-growth-of-alcoholism-in-america/>

prohibition article, the illegal nature of alcohol led “ criminal organizations [to] resort to real crimes in defense of sales territories, brand names, and labor contracts. ”

Eventually, the government realized that their efforts only increased the reliance on alcohol and made the social ills imposed by it more severe. Therefore, they repealed prohibition in 1933. Even though the Temperance Movement was dissolved, the criminal groups that were formed out of it still remained intact. These groups “ branched out into narcotics, gambling, prostitution, loan sharking and extortion, concerns they still control today,” according to The History of Alcohol article. Moreover, societal problems incurred from alcohol also affect family dynamics.

Parents who constantly drink might end up spending more time outside the house and neglect their responsibilities to their children and spouse. Thus, the article entitled Scientific Facts on Alcohol brought up the point that “[d]rinking can impair how a person performs as a parent, [and] a partner as well. ” Likewise, the Scientific Facts on Alcoholic indicated that “[t]he financial costs of alcohol purchase... can leave other family members destitute. ” This is because parents may end up using their salary to sustain their habit to the extent that their children become hungry in the process.

Children of alcoholics may not be adequately taken care of as well because their basic needs, such as clothing and shelter, are not provided for because indulgence in the habit makes their parents lose focus on what is important in their lives. The detrimental effects of alcohol become exacerbated to the point that it manifests itself in physical violence or abuse towards other people. A relationship might be jeopardized because the man, as is usually

the case, beats up his wife or girlfriend after consuming immense amount of liquor. The wife or girlfriend has a toleration limit in allowing this kind of dismal treatment.

After awhile, she is bound to leave him if the behavior does not stop or improve. Information contained in the Alcohol and Women article provided by Loyola Marymount University states that “ 57% of female victims [experience] intimate violence (i. e. , current or former spouses, boyfriends, etc.) [and] reported that the offender had been drinking at the time of the offense. [While] 62% of female victims of alcohol-related violence reported experiencing some form of injury. ” Unfortunately, these victimized women have a high likelihood of sticking by their man.

As a result, they may end up drinking as well to deal with the abuse that they experience. Furthermore, the article entitled Alcohol, Violence, and Aggression notes that aggressive behavior of alcohol drinkers’ result in “ 86 percent of homicide offenders, 37 percent of assault offenders, 60 percent of sexual offenders, up to 57 percent of men and 27 percent of women involved in marital violence, and 13 percent of child abusers. ” Excessive alcohol drinkers engage in such actions because according to the Alcohol, Violence, and Aggression article, alcohol has been known to weake[n] brain mechanisms that normally restrain impulsive behaviors, including inappropriate aggression. By impairing information processing, alcohol can also lead a person to misjudge social cues, thereby overreacting to a perceived threat. Simultaneously, a narrowing of attention may lead to an inaccurate assessment of the future risks of acting on an immediate violent

impulse. Besides aggressive behavior that is exhibited due to the lessening of inhibition, ease of interaction amongst a group of people also ensues.

Thus, men usually drink with acquaintances or colleagues at work to develop rapport and comradeship. Hence, the Alcohol and the Workplace article indicate that “[s]tudies of male-dominated occupations have described heavy drinking cultures in which workers use drinking to build solidarity and show conformity to the group.” On the contrary, alcohol can be harmful in the workplace when an individual's job performance suffers. Limitless alcohol consumption can result in people suffering from a hangover the following day, which affects and hampers concentration, memory and motor skill.

Thus, the Alcohol and the Workplace article state that hangover has a positive correlation between “ the frequency of feeling sick at work, sleeping on the job, and having problems with job tasks or co-workers.” The same article also mentions that productivity losses are attributed to alcohol. Performance at work may be affected both by the volume and pattern of drinking. Co-workers perceive that heavy drinkers have lower performance, problems in personal relationships and lack of self-direction, though drinkers themselves do not necessarily perceive effects on their work performance.

In addition, the aforementioned article also explains that There is ample evidence that people with alcohol dependence and drinking problems are on sick leave more frequently than other employees, with a significant cost to employees, employers, and social security systems.... Therefore, constant and excessive alcohol consumption can negatively affect work performance. Persistent pattern of alcohol drinking becomes a problem because it does not enable the employee to finish tasks, has a drastic effect on one's output at <https://assignbuster.com/the-destructive-growth-of-alcoholism-in-america/>

work and will hurt the company in the long-run if an employee repeatedly accumulates absences.

Nevertheless, the negative impact of alcohol on someone's means of livelihood is still not enough to detract people from taking it. Writer Caroline Ryan of BBC News says that the reason being is alcohol triggers the internal composition of our body. Alcohol releases dopamine which " which produces feelings of satisfaction. It also increases the production of the brain's natural painkiller - endorphin - which scientists think could be the means by which the brain becomes trained to crave.... Scientists believe this effect is part of the development of tolerance to, and dependence on, alcohol.

" Also, excessive alcohol drinking can contribute to health issues. According to Dr. Berman, alcohol can either directly or indirectly cause: cancers of the mouth, throat, liver, larynx, and esophagus; stomach ulcers and bleeding in the upper gastrointestinal tract; pancreatitis; cirrhosis of the liver; hypertension; cardiac arrhythmias; congestive heartfailure; peripheral nerve problems; increased susceptibility to infections. Nissl, author of Alcohol and Drug Problems, also indicates that "[l]ong-term heavy drinking damages the nervous system, heart, and brain.

It also can lead to stomach problems, medicine interactions, sexual problems, osteoporosis... " While an article entitled Alcohol Myth says that sparse drinking will still result in the " slow[ing] down [of] the heart rate, lower[ing] [of] your blood pressure, and slow[ing] [of] your breathing rate. " Also, food digestion is inhibited from fully functioning. The Alcohol and Nutrition article exhibits that alcohol interferes with the nutritional process

by affecting digestion, storage, utilization, and excretion of nutrients... Alcohol inhibits the breakdown of nutrients into usable molecules...

Alcohol impairs nutrient absorption by damaging the cells lining the stomach and intestines and disabling transport of some nutrients into the blood... Even if nutrients are digested and absorbed, alcohol can prevent them from being fully utilized by altering their transport, storage, and excretion... alcohol can impair the mechanisms by which the body controls blood glucose levels, resulting in either increased or decreased blood glucose. Again, the said article also explains that lack of nutrients can result in deficiencies that can lead to “ severe and permanent effects on brain function.

Specifically, thiamine deficiencies, often seen in alcoholics, [which] can cause severe neurological problems such as impaired movement and memory loss. ” It is also a fact that mental and emotionally faculties can also be affected. According to Green Facts, anxiety, fear and depression are common problems encountered by family members of an alcoholic and the alcoholic himself. For alcoholics, the Why Do People Drink Alcohol article discusses that alcohol intake actually causes depression since alcohol is a depressant.

While feelings of a depressed person is magnified two-folds when depression medicine stays in the system at the same time that alcohol is in one’s body. Despite the health risks involve with excessive alcohol consumption, some women may still engage in the act even when they are pregnant. According to Nemours Foundation, “[i]t's estimated that each year in the United States, 1 in every 750 infants is born with a pattern of physical, developmental, and

functional problems referred to as fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), while another 40, 000 are born with fetal alcohol effects (FAE).

" Fetal Alcohol Syndrome results in birth defects in infants that can debilitate or permanently damage one's normal capabilities and functioning. Indeed, alcohol can become toxic when there is too much of it. Infinite amount of liquor can be the cause of death for a relatively few people. This unfortunate incident is known as alcohol poisoning, also called acute alcohol intoxication. The Alcohol Myth article explains that in this specific instance, alcohol acts as a poison that attacks the body and results in death.

On a lighter note, a mild form of sleep disturbance can be induced by alcohol especially among college students who usually have the notion that " alcohol is not as bad as what people claim it to be. " The Alcohol and Sleep article points out that "[t]he more one drinks, the faster the person will fall asleep, but the likelihood of sleep disturbances increases. Alcohol consumed up to 6 hours before bedtime can affect sleep patterns. " And we are all aware that lack of sleep can make a person feel easily irritated and unfocused on the tasks at hand.

Also, we should not exclude the fact that financial costs can dampen one's available resources. According to Estimating the Economic Cost of Alcohol Abuse article, the health cost of alcohol dependence behavior which include medical, alcohol abuse and dependence treatment does not come cheap. Furthermore, hospital bills and medical inconvenience does not end there. Accidents caused by drunk driving, which endanger public safety, can accrue more damages to the physical and financial well-being of a person. Also,

mental irregularities can happen when an alcoholic attempts to commit suicide.

According to Women and Alcohol article, “ 40% of alcoholic women attempted to commit suicide, compared to 8. 8% of non-alcoholic women. [While] [y]ounger women who are alcoholics are nearly twice as likely to attempt to commit suicide (50. 5%) than older women who are alcoholics (25. 5%). ” Tendencies like this transpire because a person is emotionally unstable. The main reason why alcoholics turn to alcohol for comfort is to numb their feelings or to forget their problems. They fail to realize that trying to forget about their unpleasant situation is only fleeting and does not solve anything in the long-run.

For instance, the Why Do People Drink Alcohol article explains that drinking alcohol to deal with a break up or death in one’s family “ delays the healing process because the people aren’t giving themselves a chance to heal. ” This is because they are not confronting their problem and letting themselves experience emotions that naturally surface in this kind of circumstance. Hence, the behavior that they are engaging in-regularly drinking loads of alcohol-does not help them at all even though they will like to think so otherwise.

Thus, immense alcohol consumption may unfortunately lead to death. According to Dr. Berman, the “ third leading cause of mortality in the United States, and is responsible for approximately 100, 000 preventable deaths per year,” is alcohol. Hence, premature death due to excessive alcohol consumption is within our ability to control and avoid from happening. Also, if

death does not occur due to reckless driving, diseases that take over the body gradually-as was mentioned earlier- can also take away one's life.

If an alcoholic somehow manages to stay out of harm's way, alcohol can contribute to risky behaviors like unprotected sexual activity, use of tobacco and illegal drugs. The article entitled Alcohol: An Addictive Drug tackles the fact that alcohol " is frequently the entry-level drug that leads to harder drugs, such as cocaine and heroin. " These acts that may seem " harmless"- especially to those actively taking part in the habit- cost the government money because they shoulder any expense that is brought up. This is because effective law enforcement has to be increased and strengthened via mandatory regular training to deal with misdemeanors.

Also, according to Estimating the Economic Cost of Alcohol Abuse article, other parts of society are involved like the " criminal justice system, social welfare administration-" just to name a few- to ensure that society is not greatly troubled by the reckless behavior that alcoholics enact. Overall, limitation and prohibition of alcohol will never be successful as demonstrated by the Temperance Movement. This is because people find ways to get around the system and defy laws that go against what they want to do with their personal lives.

The key to the problems that alcohol presents is not to eliminate the source of the problem, in this case alcohol itself, but to educate young people about the adverse effects that alcohol places on them and on society as a whole. Also, tough enforcement of established laws regarding alcohol should be done. In addition, assistance should be available and given to alcoholics so that violence, alcohol craving and health issues that they have are

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addressed in a timely manner. Finally, people should keep in mind that alcohol does not solve anything.

It only creates or increases the existing problems that one faces. Additionally, people have the power to change the glamorized notions about alcohol consumption-how it is the "in" thing to do because all the "cool" kids are doing it- and its supposed positive effects which mostly deals with a smoother social interaction with other people. The media plays a crucial role in changing this persistent view. The media should stress-via their print publication, billboard ads, television and radio programs- that the negative impact of alcohol outweighs any positive impact that may be derived from it.

Also, it is essential that alcoholics are aided in finding ways to control their urges and direct it to an outlet that will be more beneficial for them. It will also be important to make people aware that proper and moderate alcohol consumption is an obligation that they should perform and abide by at all times because it is for their best interest. Hence, alcohol regulations serve people by protecting their well-being.