

The Oral Health Connection



Alcohol Abuse & Oral Health

Alcohol Abuse Statistics

Forty-four percent of the adult U.S. population (aged 18 and over) are current drinkers who have consumed at least 12 drinks in the preceding year. Although most people who drink do so safely, the minority who consume alcohol heavily produce an impact that ripples outward to encompass their families, friends, and communities. The following statistics give a glimpse of the magnitude of problem drinking:

- Approximately 14 million Americans—7.4 percent of the population —meet the diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse or alcoholism.
- Approximately one in four children younger than 18 years old in the United States is exposed to alcohol abuse or alcohol dependence in the family.
- More than one-half of American adults have a close family member who has or has had alcoholism.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Journal: Alcohol Research & Health: Highlights From the Tenth Special Report to Congress, Health Risks and Benefits of Alcohol Consumption (Volume 24, Number 1, 2000 ed.) Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. Retrieved October 07, 2002 from the World Wide Web:<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/arh24-1/05-11.pdf>

Alcohol Abuse Can Lead to Poor Oral Health

Alcohol abuse appears to lead to periodontal disease, tooth decay and mouth sores that are potentially precancerous. People who abuse alcohol are at **HIGH** risk of having seriously deteriorated teeth, gums and compromised oral health in general. 80% of alcohol abusers have moderate to severe gum disease and decayed teeth with more than one-third having potentially precancerous lesions, a rate much higher than the general population in the US. *Dentistry Today* Pg 32, June 2003

Alcohol Abuse Can Cause:

Irritation of the gums, tongue and oral tissues
Poor healing after dental surgery
Poor dental health habits
Increase in tooth decay
Poor compliance with home care regimens to develop and maintain good oral health
Increased risk of periodontal (gum) disease
Smoking and drinking are risk factors for higher incidence of tooth decay, periodontal disease and oral cancer.

Reduce Your Risk Factors

Problem drinkers should seek help with their addiction, the oral health complications of alcohol abuse are just some of a myriad of potential health problems caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

Brush and Floss at least twice a day

Have your teeth and gums cleaned and checked by your dentist at least every 6 months

