



# When someone you care about or work with has a problem with alcohol

**Alcohol abuse and alcoholism take a toll not only on the abuser, but also on those who care for him or her, as well as work with him or her.**

**17 million Americans abuse alcohol or are alcoholics.**

We all want to be supportive, but covering up, or preventing the negative consequences of someone else's problem, only serves to help the person maintain his/her denial and continue down the road to increasing abuse or dependence. This activity is called enabling. While intentions are usually very caring, outcomes of this process are usually negative.

Don't ignore and/or cover up the problem—**take action.**

You may not be sure, however, if someone has a problem. Signs of an alcohol-related problem include:

- An appearance of unusual behavior, which is getting worse.
- Being argumentative, isolated, irritable and/or irresponsible.
- Demonstrating poor judgment, risky or reckless behavior.

- Breaking rules.
- Withdrawing from activities that involve others.
- Decreased interest in activities.
- Absenteeism and/or tardiness, particularly on Mondays.
- Decreased productivity and ability to focus.
- Changes in appearance, or a lack of attention to appearance

If the person whom you suspect as having a problem with alcohol is a co-worker, you might also observe:

- A need for you and others to pick up part of the workload.
- Requesting/needing co-workers to cover up for tardiness.
- Making a lot of personal calls.
- Always being “tired.”

## What to do if you suspect a problem with alcohol abuse

Don't allow someone else to put your health, safety or job in danger. If someone is using alcohol on the job, and impairs your safety, tell your supervisor right away. If the situation is not that critical, then:

- **Stop all rescue missions.** Allow the user to fully experience harmful effects of drinking. This is ultimately important. As long as others around the person with the drinking problem compensate for his/her actions, there is no need for the person to face the problem or its consequences. The negative behaviors seem allowed, and in fact are perpetuated.
- **Educate yourself about alcoholism,** alcohol-related problems and local resources for getting help.

- **Observe and record behaviors.** Prepare, in advance of approaching the person, a list of specific problems that have occurred because of the person's drinking.
- **Talk with him/her shortly after an alcohol-related problem has occurred.**
- **Approach the person in private,** and at a time and in a place that you can talk without interruption.
- **While talking, be specific, relate consequences, and provide information about available help.**
- **Be prepared for denial and anger.** These are not directed at you, but are a part of the condition.
- **Don't forget about yourself.** Get support for you also.

When you do approach the person, try to get him or her to agree to some form of positive action. Encourage a referral to a professional or a resource in his/her community.

- Be positive in your approach.
- Do what you can, but remember the 3 C's:
  - You did not cause the other person's problem;
  - You cannot control the other person; and
  - You cannot cure the other person.

*This document is for your information only. It is not meant to give medical advice. It should not be used to replace a visit with a provider. Magellan Health does not endorse other resources that may be mentioned here.*