

RECOGNIZING THAT YOU HAVE A PROBLEM IS AN IMPORTANT 1ST STEP

Once you recognize the problem, there are many steps you can take to help yourself -

- ★ Take responsibility for helping yourself. Recognize that you have choices and can choose to make your life better.
- ★ Write down your reasons for cutting down or stopping. Review the list often.
- ★ Keep a diary of how much you are drinking or using. Set limits and long-term goals.
- ★ Make a record of your progress and successes, and give yourself credit.
- ★ Learn to forgive yourself and others. Getting angry at yourself or blaming other people will probably make things worse.
- ★ Avoid temptation. Spend time with people who don't use, and seek out alcohol and drug-free activities.
- ★ Make a list of problem situations. Develop ways to avoid or deal with them successfully.
- ★ Recognize the value of help and encouragement from others. Talk with family or friends about your concerns.

- ★ Measure progress and success one day at a time.



- ★ Contact the National Spinal Cord Injury Association (1-800-962-9629) for information about SCI support groups in your area.

- ★ Learn to be assertive, look out for yourself, and learn to say "No."



- ★ Attend a local Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous support group.

- ★ Contact Alcoholics Anonymous (1-800-835-1935 or www.alcoholics-anonymous.org).

- ★ Contact Narcotics Anonymous (1-888-747-4047 or www.na.org).

- ★ Talk to someone at your local mental health center or hospital or to a physician and ask about help.



Spinal Cord Injury MODEL SYSTEM

Virginia Commonwealth University Health System
Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
Richmond, VA 23298-0677
Voice: (804) 828-0861
Fax: (804) 828-5074
E-mail: mameade@vcu.edu
URL: <http://www.sci.pmr.vcu.edu>

Restoring
QUALITY of
FUNCTION
HOPE

Layout and design — Debbie West

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This work was supported by funds from the National Institute on Disability & Rehabilitation Research in the Office of Special Education & Rehabilitation Services in the U.S. Department of Education (grant #H133N000015).

Alcohol and Drug Use After Spinal Cord Injury

Fundamentals, Recognizing a Problem, and Finding Help



by LAURA TAYLOR
& JEFF KREUTZER

Spinal Cord Injury MODEL SYSTEM

GUIDE # P3
IN A SERIES PROMOTING
HEALTH AND SELF-HELP
THROUGH EDUCATION

Use of alcohol or drugs after spinal cord injury (SCI) can result in health problems and slow recovery.

Recognizing an alcohol or drug problem can be tough. Luckily, there are often warning signs. Below is a list of subtle and not so subtle signs that alcohol or drugs are a problem. Review the list and check off each item that describes you. The more items you check, the more likely that alcohol or drugs are causing problems in your life.

- I was drunk or high at the time of my injury.
- I have felt bad or guilty about my drinking or drug use.



- I get angry or upset when people ask about or complain about my alcohol or drug use.
- I often participate in social and recreational activities involving alcohol or drugs.

- I have had a drink or used drugs early in the day to steady my nerves or to get going.



- I have thought about cutting down on my drinking or drug use.
- I often miss work or school because of drugs or alcohol.
- I have had legal problems because of alcohol or drug use (e.g., arrests, DUI).

- I have family or relationship problems due to alcohol or drug use.

- I have friends or family who drink too much or use drugs.



HOW MUCH DO YOU REALLY KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS?

To find out, circle T for true if you think the statement is true, and circle F for false if you don't agree.

1. Most people who have had a SCI did not have anything to drink for at least 3 to 4 hours before their injury. T F
2. Alcohol use and addiction are not as big a problem in this country as illegal drugs. T F
3. Alcohol improves health and sexual performance. T F
4. If you only drink beer, you can't become an alcoholic. T F
5. People like you more if you drink. T F
6. Drinking is a good way to reduce stress. T F
7. Unemployment or depression is an acceptable excuse to drink or use drugs. T F
8. If you don't drink alone, you can't be an alcoholic. T F
9. Someone with a SCI should be able to drink or use drugs like anyone else. T F
10. The only people affected by drinking and using drugs are those who use them. T F

ANSWERS: 1. F 2. F 3. F 4. F 5. F 6. F 7. F 8. F 9. F 10. F

WHY SHOULD YOU CHOOSE ABSTINENCE?

Remember that using alcohol and drugs after SCI -



- slows the recovery process
- increases the risk of accidents and other injuries
- decreases awareness of the need to do pressure releases

- increases frequency of urination that can lead to dehydration, bladder accidents, and urinary tract and kidney infections

- makes depression worse and causes negative personality changes

- can contribute to disorientation, memory, temper, fatigue, and concentration problems



- can result in legal problems

- can lead to problems with relationships, school, or work

- impairs problem solving and judgment

- increases risk of skin breakdown, skin infections, and pressure sores



- is associated with heart, liver, kidney, and brain damage

- can slow down or decrease the effectiveness of medications

- leads to problems such as saying and doing things without thinking

- increases muscle spasticity

- can make you feel blue or down, especially when the effects wear off

