

# April is Alcohol Awareness Month

*Ann Marie Wolf, Army Substance Abuse*

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**When many people think of alcohol abusers, they picture teenagers sneaking drinks before high school football games or at unsupervised parties. However, alcohol abuse is prevalent within many demographic groups in the United States. People who abuse alcohol can also be *college students* who binge drink at local bars, *pregnant women* who put their babies at risk for fetal alcohol syndrome when they drink, *professionals* who drink after a long day of work, or *senior citizens* who drink out of loneliness.**

### ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

About 15 percent of U.S. workers said they either used alcohol at work or were impaired on the job, according to research from the University of Buffalo's Research Institute on Addictions.

Researchers interviewed 2,805 adult workers between January 2002 and June 2003, and asked them about workplace alcohol use and impairment over the previous 12 months. Questions included how often they drank within two hours of reporting to work, drank during the work day, worked under the influence of alcohol, or worked with a hangover.

Lead author Michael R. Frone, PH.D., and colleagues found that 1.8 percent of the workforce drank alcohol at least once before coming to work, and 7.1 percent drank during the workday – often during lunch breaks but also during other breaks or while on the job. An estimated 1.7 percent of employees worked under the influence of alcohol, and approximately 9.2 percent had gone to work with a hangover, the authors said.

"Of all psychoactive substances with the potential to impair cognitive and behavioral performance, alcohol is the mostly widely used and misused substance in the general population and in the workforce," Frone said. "The misuse of alcohol by employed adults is an important social policy issue with the potential to undermine employee productivity and safety."

Alcohol use and impairment was more common among men than women, among younger employees, and more prevalent among evening and night shift workers.

This study was reported in the January 2006 issue of the Journal of Studies on Alcohol.

The above information provided by the Army Center for Substance Abuse E-prevention newsletter.



**While** the misuse and abuse of alcohol to dangerous and high-risk behaviors, it is possible to drink responsibly. The following are some easy tips to assist in making the responsible decision if you decide to drink:

**Eat** before and during drinking – while a full stomach cannot prevent alcohol from affecting you, eating starchy and high-protein foods will slow it down.

**Don't** gulp or chug your drinks; drink slowly and make the drinks last- try to drink no more than one alcoholic drink per hour.

**Alternate** between alcohol and non-alcoholic drinks – this will give your body extra time to eliminate some of the alcohol.

**Remember** the word **HALT: NEVER DRINK** if you are hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.

**Before** you celebrate, designate – identify a responsible driver who will not drink, or plan ahead to use public transportation.

### **Tips to avoid drinking**

**It** is always **OK** not to drink. Whether you always abstain from drinking, you simply aren't in the mood, or because you are hungry, angry, lonely or tired, it is always your choice to make. In instances where you feel pressured to drink alcohol, there are countless ways of saying no:

**"No, thank you"** – It's your choice not to drink.

**"Alcohol's not my thing".**

**"I'm the designated driver".**

**"No thanks, I already have a drink".**

**"I'm on medication".**

**Simply** walk away.

Another way to avoid drinking alcohol is to enjoy mock tails. Mock tails, contain the same ingredients as many popular alcoholic drinks with one exception, they don't contain alcohol. Refreshing and fun, they can be consumed without having to worry about any of the consequences of alcoholic drinks.

**For more information or to schedule individual organization training, contact the Prevention office at 245-4576/3790.**

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