

# Excessive Alcohol Use May Lead To Long Term Problems

When it comes to drinking, it seems as though Americans are fond of taking an alcoholic beverage from time to time.

In a Gallup Consumption Habits poll, 63 percent of Americans reported that they drink alcohol, while 37 percent reported they abstain.

While alcohol is typically not harmful in moderation, and can actually be beneficial in certain instances, when alcohol consumption becomes excessive it may also turn problematic.

And as the Gallup poll points out, excessive alcohol consumption is a genuine concern for many Americans.

Among women, 7 percent of respondents fell into the category of excessive drinking, while 9 percent of men fell into that category. ("Excessive drinking" is classified as having 20 or more drinks in a 7-day span.)

While alcohol education programs exist for younger people such as school-aged children and teenagers, programs are not as readily available, if at all, to adults.

Though most adults are keenly aware that excessive alcohol consumption is unhealthy, getting a better grasp of the possible consequences of such consumption could be a means to reduce individual alcohol consumption.

According to the American Liver Foundation, three types of liver disease are commonly related to alcohol consumption.

## Alcoholic Hepatitis

As much as 35 percent of heavy drinkers will develop alcoholic hepatitis, which is an inflammation of the liver.

Mild alcoholic hepatitis can last for years and lead to progressive liver damage, while severe alcoholic hepatitis can occur suddenly, such as after binge drinking, and possibly lead to life-threatening complications.

Mild forms of alcoholic hepatitis might be reversible if the individual stops consuming alcohol. Symptoms of alcoholic hepatitis can include nausea, fever, jaundice, loss of appetite, and vomiting.

## Fatty Liver

Fatty liver occurs when fat cells are built up in the liver, which occurs almost universally among heavy drinkers.

Symptoms of fatty liver are typically non-existent, though discomfort in the upper abdomen can be a side effect thanks to the enlargement of the liver. For those who stop drinking, the condition of fatty liver can improve.

## Alcoholic Cirrhosis

The most serious, and arguably the most widely known, type of alcohol-related liver disease is alcoholic cirrhosis, which occurs when normal liver tissue is replaced by scar tissue.

As much as 20 percent of heavy drinkers develop cirrhosis, typically after 10 or more years of consuming alcohol.

While the symptoms of cirrhosis are similar to those of alcoholic hepatitis, cirrhosis is not reversible.

People suffering from cirrhosis might see their condition stabilize if they stop drinking, but that is not a guarantee and cirrhosis remains a life-threatening disease.

For heavy drinkers, liver disease is progressive. For example,

a heavy drinker can initially suffer from fatty liver, which can then progress to alcoholic hepatitis and finally to alcoholic cirrhosis.

To learn more about liver disease, visit the American Liver Foundation Web site at [www.liverfoundation.org](http://www.liverfoundation.org).

If you or someone you know could possibly be suffering from alcohol addiction, visit the Alcoholics Anonymous Web site at [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org) for further information and assistance.

aa.org for further information and assistance.

## Potential Complications of Alcohol-Induced Liver Disease

While it can be enjoyable to let loose and have a few drinks, overdoing it when it comes to alcohol can lead to very serious consequences. Heavy drinkers, for instance, are greatly increasing their risk for

alcohol-induced liver disease, which can result in the following unfortunate and uncomfortable complications:

- \* Enlarged spleen
- \* High blood pressure in the liver
- \* Changes in mental function
- \* Coma
- \* Kidney failure
- \* Bleeding in the esophagus
- \* Liver cancer

# Eating Before School Important For Learning

The positive effects that eating breakfast has on students' performance in school continues to grow as more schools are serving breakfast.

The School Breakfast Program has been in place for about 40 years, and today more than nine million children eat school breakfast everyday.

Students who ate breakfast at school had general increases in math grades and reading scores, better attention levels, improved classroom behavior and perfor-

mance as well as reduced school nurse visits, according to a recent study by the University of Minnesota and Minnesota Dept. of Children, Families & Learning.

School breakfasts are required to meet federal dietary guidelines and provide students with 25 percent of their daily allowance for protein, calcium, iron, vitamins A and C, and calories.

Meals are served in age-appropriate portion sizes and schools have many different serving techniques - from 'grab and go' bags and

hallway kiosks to breakfast in the classroom and traditional cafeteria service.

Many schools are offering breakfast at no cost students because of the proven value of eating breakfast.

Students can learn more about why breakfast is important, take interactive quizzes and vote for their favorite breakfast food as part of the "School Breakfast - Fuel Your Imagination" campaign online at [www.schoolbreakfast.org](http://www.schoolbreakfast.org) now through National School Breakfast Week, March 3-7, 2008.

# Don't Forget About Cardio Workouts

When it comes time to lose weight, many people look to the nearby fitness center to help them shed those extra pounds. When entering a gym for the first time, newcomers are often overwhelmed by the buzz of activity and the clanking of weights coupled with the host of machines they seem to know nothing about.

While an initial foray into the gym can be intimidating, it's important to keep in mind that one of the best ways to lose weight is something you've been doing almost since the day you were born. Since the moment you took your first step, you've been doing cardio, or cardiovascular exercise. More widely referred to as aerobic exercise, cardio has a number of benefits, not the least of which is losing weight.

Cardio strengthens bones. Osteoporosis is a bone disease in which the bones become brittle and fragile due to tissue loss. This tissue loss can be the result of age or deficiencies in calcium or vitamin D. A workout that includes jogging or even fast walking can reduce the risk of osteoporosis because, as the National Osteoporosis Foundation (NOF) points out, these weight-bearing activities strengthen the skeletal system. NOF also notes that any exercise in which feet or legs are bearing the weight, including dancing and climbing, are

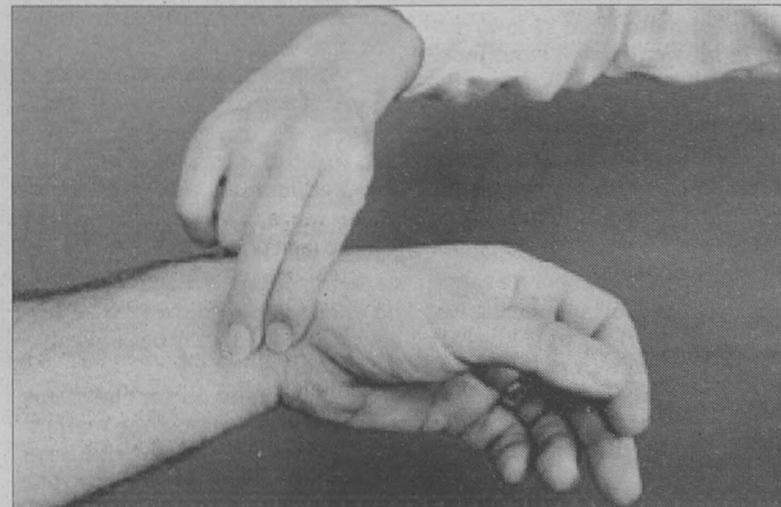
effective cardio exercises.

Cardio reduces body fat. Including cardio in your regular exercise routine helps to increase lean body tissue while reducing fat. If the goal of your weight loss is to look better, then including cardio in your regular routine is a great way to achieve this. While this might sound simple, the more calories you burn, the more pounds you'll lose, and cardio has proven to be a great way to burn calories.

Cardio can reduce blood pressure. Many people choose to lose weight not because of a New Year's resolution, but because their doctor (or their body) has told them they need to shed weight to survive. For those with high blood pressure, cardio has proven an effective way

to lower blood pressure. A 2002 study at Tulane University found that aerobic, or cardiovascular, exercise lowered blood pressure in all groups of people, whether they had pre-existing conditions or had normal blood pressure.

Cardio can help relieve the pain of arthritis. A cardiovascular program that includes water exercise can be especially valuable to arthritis sufferers. Such exercise can help keep the joints moving while strengthening the muscles around the joints. In addition, cardiovascular exercise increases energy levels, which helps arthritis sufferers better handle some of the daily tasks that have become difficult as a result of the arthritis.



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