

Substance Abuse

Like cancer or heart disease, alcoholism is a chronic disease with its own symptoms and causes. The disease is progressive and often fatal if not treated. Abusing alcohol can harm many of the body's major organs and systems. It increases risks for various cancers, cirrhosis of the liver, diabetes, peptic ulcers, stroke, infertility, brain damage and memory loss.

Recognize the Symptoms

Alcoholics have a reaction to alcohol that makes them crave more, and more drinking triggers more craving.

Heredity plays a major role in alcoholism. Studies show children of alcoholics are at greater risk of the disease. Other risk factors are family and social environment, personal history and psychological makeup. Some alcoholics start out as moderate drinkers, increasing their use and dependence on alcohol over time. Others crave more from the start. Moderate drinking is defined as one drink a day or less (or 7 drinks or fewer per week) for women; two drinks a day or less (or 14 or fewer drinks per week) for men. Late-onset alcoholism often occurs when a moderate drinker suddenly experiences a stressful event, such as losing a job or spouse.

Check your Patterns

Few alcoholics will admit they have a problem. It's typical to believe they're OK – and that everything and everybody else is wrong. Those willing to face facts usually find plenty of clues that their drinking is out of control. You may suffer from alcoholism if:

- You have experienced problems on the job, with the law or with your family because of your drinking.
- You avoid parties or places where liquor isn't served.
- You look forward to a time in the day when you can start drinking.
- You worry alcohol won't be available when you want it.
- You periodically try to slow down or stop drinking.
- You always have a "good reason" why you need a drink -- perhaps a tough day at work, an argument or stress.
- You experience symptoms of withdrawal with brief periods of abstinence.
- Friends, family members and/or others have talked to you about your drinking.

Get Help

Quitting drinking is essential to recovery, but it's only part of the process. Treatment is a learning experience in which you build self-esteem, reduce stress and perhaps, develop your spirituality. It's a matter of rebuilding yourself through small but positive changes. Step by step, you become strong enough to take control of your life.

Our dedicated consultants are available **24 hours everyday** to address your needs. Appointments can normally be scheduled within **two working days**. **After hours** and **weekend** sessions can be arranged, if needed. Crisis calls are always handled immediately. Services are **confidential** to the extent permitted by law. To access these services call First Sun EAP at **800-968-8143** or in Greater Columbia **803-376-2668**.

For more information on this topic as well as the other benefits you receive from First Sun EAP, please see our website at: www.firstsuneap.com