

# Master Brewers Safety Toolbox Talk



## Alcohol Abuse

### Overview

Working in the brewing industry has many safety concerns. Whether its hot liquids, high pressures, or dangerous gasses. With all the imminent dangers that surround us, we often forget to look outside the box at issues we might not even believe are a problem. Alcohol abuse and binge drinking is a bit of an “elephant in the room” conversation but should be talked about more with brewery staff. In this Toolbox Talk, we will dive into what is moderate drinking, binge drinking, and heavy drinking. We will also explore some of the signs of alcohol abuse, effects on the body, and treatments.

### Definitions of Alcohol Consumption

#### Moderate Drinking

One drink or less per day for women and two drinks or less per day for men.

#### Binge Drinking

A pattern of drinking that brings a person’s blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 g/dL or higher. This typically happens when men consume five or more drinks in about 2 hr or when women consume four or more drinks in about 2 hr.

#### Heavy Drinking

Eight or more drinks per week for women and 15 or more drinks for men per week.

#### Alcohol Use Disorder

“A chronic relapsing brain disease characterized by compulsive alcohol use, loss of control over alcohol intake, and a negative emotional state when not using.” – National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA).

### Health Effects of Alcohol Abuse

#### Short Term Effects

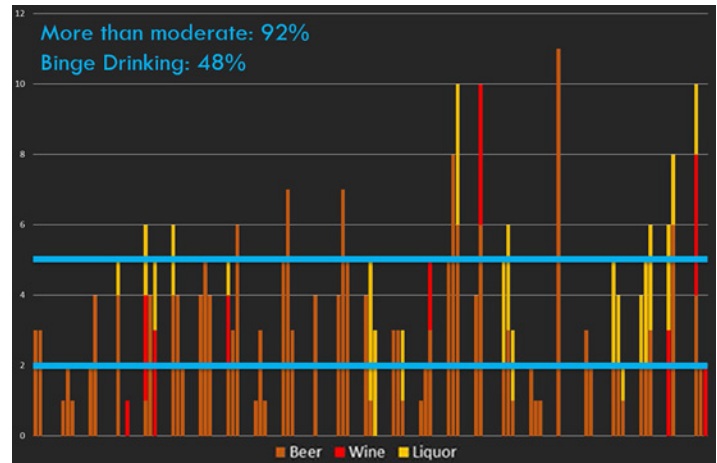
- Injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, and burns
- Violence, including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency that results from high blood alcohol levels

#### Long Term Effects

- High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, and digestive problems
- Cancer of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon
- Learning and memory problems, including dementia and poor school performance
- Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
- Social problems, including lost productivity, family problems, and unemployment
- Alcohol dependence or alcoholism

Source: CDC

### Brewery Staff Survey



We asked 25 brewery staff members to track their alcohol consumption over a 3-day weekend.

- 92% of surveyed staff were over the moderate level of alcohol consumption.
- 48% reported at least one occurrence of binge drinking.

### Risks of Binge and Heavy Drinking

Binge drinking is associated with many health problems, including

- Unintentional injuries such as car crashes, falls, burns, and alcohol poisoning
- Chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and liver disease
- Cancer of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon
- Memory and learning problems
- Alcohol use disorders

Drinking too much, including binge drinking, cost the United States \$249 billion in 2010, or \$2.05 per drink. These costs resulted from losses in workplace productivity, health care expenditures, criminal justice costs, and other expenses. Binge drinking was responsible for 77% of these costs, or \$191 billion.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

### Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol Use Disorder

- Being unable to limit the amount of alcohol you drink
- Wanting to cut down on how much you drink or making unsuccessful attempts to do so
- Spending a lot of time drinking, obtaining alcohol, or recovering from alcohol use

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If you have questions regarding flooring in breweries, please see your supervisor/manager or contact a member of the Safety Committee for additional information.

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- Feeling a strong craving or urge to drink alcohol
- Failing to fulfill major obligations at work, school, or home due to repeated alcohol use
- Continuing to drink alcohol even though you know it's causing physical, social, or interpersonal problems
- Giving up or reducing social and work activities and hobbies
- Using alcohol in situations where it's not safe, such as when driving or swimming
- Developing a tolerance to alcohol, so you need more to feel its effects, or you have a reduced effect from the same amount
- Experiencing withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, and shaking, when you don't drink, or drinking to avoid these symptoms

Source: Mayo Clinic

## **Alcohol Abuse Treatments**

If you feel that you sometimes drink too much alcohol, your drinking is causing problems, or your family is concerned about your drinking, talk

with your doctor. Other ways to get help include talking with a mental health professional or seeking help from a support group such as Alcoholics Anonymous or a similar type of self-help group.

Because denial is common, you may not feel like you have a problem with drinking. You might not recognize how much you drink or how many problems in your life are related to alcohol use. Listen to relatives, friends, or coworkers when they ask you to examine your drinking habits or to seek help. Consider talking with someone who has had a problem with drinking but has stopped.

Source: Mayo Clinic

## **Conclusions**

Navigating the confusing and frustrating situations that our jobs put us in can be tough. Safety comes in all shapes and sizes. Why not make our consumption part of the safety conversation?

Thank you for enduring this difficult conversation and remember—safety always.