



Alcohol

Often, people use alcohol to help cope with the stresses of living; however, sometimes this “coping mechanism” goes awry. For some, their pattern of alcohol use includes problems: preoccupation with alcohol, poor intake control, increased tolerance, withdrawal symptoms, and failure to stop. Such indicates signs of unhealthy alcohol use/misuse and could be considered as signs of alcoholism—especially if your way of drinking creates recurring and significant distress and troubles in your (and others) daily living.

Problem alcohol use can affect people from all walks of life, but the main factors contributing to how alcohol can affect people’s behaviour and bodies are genetic, psychological, social, and environment. Excessive use over time can alter brain networks related to judgement, planning, inhibition, and pleasure and create huge relational, social, and personal upheaval.

Risk factors in developing alcoholism or problem use of alcohol can include (but not exclusive to):

- ❖ Starting Young: people who start (binge) drinking when young
- ❖ Family History: people who have family members with alcohol problems
- ❖ Mental Health: people who experience anxiety, depression, schizophrenia or bipolar disorder
- ❖ History of Trauma: people with a history of emotional or other trauma
- ❖ Social-Cultural: people who experience the glamorisation of drinking by friends, TV, media, society

Signs of Problem Drinking

Signs for the individual of loved one to consider:

Inability to limit intake; developing a tolerance
Repeated failed attempts to stop
Lots of time and money spent on drinking, getting, recovering
Strong cravings for alcohol
Not fulfilling responsibilities in work, school or home; reducing social and work activities; isolation
Continued use despite negative effects physical, social, relational,
Risky behaviour in use and getting alcohol
Having withdrawal symptoms like nausea, shaking, sweating and drinking to avoid, reduce, eradicate these symptoms

Exceeding Low Risk Guidelines:

- ❖ +11 standard drinks per week for women
- ❖ +17 standard drinks per week for men

In Ireland, a standard drink (which has about ten grams of pure alcohol in it) includes:

- ❖ 35.5ml of spirits (about 38% volume)
- ❖ 100ml of wine (about 12.5% volume)
- ❖ 237ml of beer (about 4.5% volume)
- ❖ 275ml of alcopop (about 5% volume)

Treatment

Depending on a person’s needs, there are various approaches to treating alcoholism, e.g., brief intervention, individual or group counselling, outpatient program, or residential inpatient stay. Treatments could include:

- ❖ Psychological. Counselling (individual or groups) to explore motives, behaviours and their effects, attitudes, values, understandings, coping skills, supports, etc. And to explore or treat traumas or other mental health concerns.
- ❖ Detox and Withdrawal. Detoxifying, potentially under medical management.
- ❖ Development: Education, goal setting, CBT, self-help manuals, counselling.
- ❖ Oral medications. Specialised drugs to induce negative physical effects if you do drink.
- ❖ Ongoing Support. Aftercare programs and support groups that help maintenance.