

Drug and Alcohol Education

Description of Health Risks

The scope and impact of health risks from alcohol and drug abuse are both alarming and well documented, ranging from mood altering to life threatening, with consequences that extend beyond the individual to family, organizations and society at large. The university, therefore, conducts regular programs to educate its students, faculty and staff that consumption and use of drugs may alter behavior, distort perception, impair thinking, impede judgment, and lead to physical or psychological dependence.

Alcohol and/or drug abuse may lead to the deterioration of physical health by causing or contributing to various health conditions including but not limited to fatigue, nausea, personal injury, insomnia, pathological organ damage, some forms of cancer, pancreatitis, heart attack, respiratory depression, birth defects, convulsions, coma, and even death. Alcohol and drug abuse may also result in deterioration of mental health by causing or contributing to various conditions such as increased aggression, hallucinations, depression, disorientation, and psychosis.

Alcohol consumption causes a number of marked changes in behavior. Even low doses significantly impair the judgment and coordination required to drive a car safely, increasing the likelihood that the driver will be involved in an accident. Low to moderate doses of alcohol also increases the incidence of a variety of aggressive acts, including spouse and child abuse.

Moderate to high doses of alcohol cause marked impairments in higher mental functions, severely altering a person's ability to learn and remember information. Very high doses cause respiratory depression and death. If combined with other depressants of the central nervous system, much lower doses of alcohol will produce the effects just described. Repeated use of alcohol can lead to dependence. Sudden cessation of alcohol intake is likely to produce withdrawal symptoms, including severe anxiety, tremors, hallucinations, and convulsions. Alcohol withdrawal can be life threatening. Long-term consumption of large quantities of alcohol, particularly when combined with poor nutrition, can also lead to permanent damage to vital organs such as the brain and the liver.

Mothers who drink alcohol during pregnancy may give birth to infants with fetal alcohol syndrome. These infants have irreversible physical abnormalities and mental retardation. In addition, research indicates that children of alcoholic parents are at greater risk than other youngsters of becoming alcoholics.