



Recovery Notes

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Scientific Recovery

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For Problems with Alcohol

OUTPATIENT TREATMENT FOR HIGH-PROFILE WOMEN

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Who are the women with drinking problems?

More women are drinking now than at any time in recent history. The number of women arrested for drunken driving and the number of women who show up in emergency rooms for being dangerously intoxicated have both grown dramatically. Women with drinking problems come from an array of backgrounds and differ greatly among themselves. Some are highly valued by society while others represent groups outside the mainstream.

HIGH STATUS OR HIGH FUNCTIONING WOMEN

These women may be wealthy or have succeeded professionally in competitive fields such as law, business, or medicine. Their heavy drinking may go unnoticed for a long time, as drinking may be a part of their cultural world. They may also have other addictions like workaholism and other compulsive activities

that create a sense of control such as eating disorders, exercise or shopping. The social prominence of such women may mean they have a lot to lose if their addiction becomes known. These women are the least likely to be identified as addicted by family and medical staff until the disease is in an advanced stage.

OLDER WOMEN

As they grow older, more women than men become drug and alcohol dependent. While older men drink to pass the time, women in this group drink to reduce depression. One of the most common patterns among older women is the use of alcohol to cope with aging and their lost roles – widowhood, the empty nest as children leave home, divorce and retirement.

WOMEN IN HELPING PROFESSIONS

The tendency to “give all” and lose touch with one’s own needs is a known danger in the helping professions. Substance addiction is the most frequent disabling illness for the medical professional, although actual rates of addiction are not higher than among the general population. Long working hours, stress from changes in the health care system, and isolated work may be associated with burnout and a variety of addictions, including alcohol abuse and overeating. Women may be at particular risk since their traditional family role as caretaker is combined with a work role as a helper.

SINGLE PROFESSIONAL WOMEN

Single professional women are among the most likely to be heavy drinkers. They report the frequent use of alcohol as an escape

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from the demands of their jobs and as a way to relax after long working hours. Keeping up with both work and home life, particularly for single working mothers with children is associated with more drinking. Opportunities for women to use alcohol are increased in male-dominated professions.

ADOLESCENT GIRLS

Drinking and smoking among adolescent girls is growing at a fast rate and there is less social disapproval of girls' binge drinking than ever before. Teens who engage in drinking alcohol often have other problems such as early pregnancy, delinquency, and truancy. Teen girls who drink heavily have lower achievement, less responsibility and less control over their feelings of anger and impulsivity. A developmental challenge for all teen girls is the tendency to place too much emphasis on pleasing others rather than on their own interests. Thus, when they are exposed to drinking and other risky behaviors, they are highly vulnerable.

COLLEGE WOMEN

Binge drinking (more than four drinks in a row) is rampant among college women. Social norms that previously deterred women from binge drinking are disappearing and there is less disapproval and perception of risk. College drinking is involved in the majority of unsafe sexual practices and date rapes. Other addictions such as binge eating, compulsive exercise, and workaholism are also particular risks for college women.

LESBIAN/BISEXUAL/TRANSGENDER WOMEN

LGBT individuals are more likely than straight individuals to use alcohol and have higher rates of substance abuse. They are less likely to abstain from use and more likely to continue heavy drinking into later life. About one third of lesbians are estimated to be alcoholic. Gay bars, which have historically been a place for much socializing, and widespread homophobia, which is oppressive to and stressful for

lesbians, have contributed to the high rates of heavy drinking among lesbians.

HOUSEWIVES

Women who leave their careers to be at home appear to be especially vulnerable to excessive drinking. They use alcohol to medicate feelings of anxiety about not earning a paycheck, boredom with housework and childcare, and guilt about these reactions. Drinking several tall glasses of wine can make those feelings recede temporarily, but can lead to drinking problems and addiction.

As these groups demonstrate, it is important to recognize that while female gender plays a role in addictions, so do other factors. Family history, physical health and emotional problems, age, sexual orientation, education, work history, and social change all help to shape a woman's vulnerability to problems with alcohol.

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Do You Have A Drinking Problem?

The following questions may help you determine whether or not you have a drinking problem.

- **How many drinks does it take before you begin to feel the first effects of alcohol?** If three or more, give yourself two points.
- **Have close friends or relatives worried or complained about your drinking in the past year?** If yes, give yourself two points.
- **Do you sometimes take a drink in the morning when you first get up?** If yes, give yourself one point.
- **Are there times when you drink and afterward you can't remember what you said or did?** If yes, give yourself one point.
- **Do you sometimes feel the need to cut down on your drinking?** If yes, give yourself one point.

If you score a total of two or more points, or if you can hold six or more drinks without falling asleep or passing out, you may well have a drinking problem. You should do something about it. It does not matter whether or not you are physically addicted to alcohol; it does not matter whether or not you can, to some degree, curb your drinking now. If you have acquired a measure of dependence on alcohol, your drinking may well become worse over time. Help is available, and it is best to seek help early.

Scientific Recovery

Scientific Recovery is an evidence-based treatment program for women seeking state-of-the-art, individual therapy for problem drinking. Our focus is on professional women who have recognized that alcohol is a problem they no longer want in their lives. Our goal is to assist women not only to eliminate their alcohol dependence, but also to be happy that they did.



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