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The Long Term Consequences of Drinking

Every ten seconds, someone dies due to alcohol. By the time I've finished typing this paragraph, roughly ninety six people will die as a consequence of alcohol consumption. By the time I've finished writing this essay in its entirety, the number will be up to 28,800. That's thousands of families whose lives have changed forever, thousands of mothers, fathers, sisters, and brothers who will be left waiting for someone who will never come home to them. Think before you drink, is that a fate you would want for your family?

Alcohol related deaths are entirely preventable, and yet, more people fall victim to them than HIV, AIDS, and tuberculosis. HIV and AIDS are responsible for roughly 2.8% of deaths each year, tuberculosis accounts for roughly 1.7% of deaths, alcohol? It causes 4.7% of all deaths, and this number only continues to rise each year. A report done by the World Health Organization showed that at least 2.6 million deaths per year could have been prevented if alcohol had been avoided. Researchers from Florida Atlantic University's Schmidt College of Medicine decided to look into the percentage of deaths caused by alcohol from 1999 through 2020, and to put it mildly, what they found was deeply disconcerting. The results show us that alcohol-related deaths have nearly doubled from 10.7 per 100,000 in 1999, to 21.6 per 100,000 in 2020. The total number of alcohol-related deaths has suffered from a nearly doubled increase, going from 19,356 to 48,870 in just a few years. The highest increase that we can see in these studies has occurred in the group of those aged 25 to 34, with the number of deaths nearly quadrupling in the span of twenty one years.

Alcoholism, (classified as Alcohol use disorder), can come from a multitude of things, ranging from simple stress relief, to more serious things such as depression or varying other

mental disorders. It seems like such an easy solution, just a drink or two to take the edge off, but what happens when that makes it all worse? Of course, for the one drinking it can be easy to notice the side effects ailing you. They might feel dizzy, or a bit sick, and they're okay, it's worth it, however, what the one drinking might not notice is how this is affecting their family and friends. In the US alone, there are approximately 11 million children and adolescents living with at least one alcoholic parent. This can lead to these children and adolescents not receiving the basic needs, or proper care needed for them to grow and develop properly. This can cause a multitude of issues for them, of course. A few of these problems being, difficulty performing well in academic settings, difficulty forming long-term, healthy relationships, low self esteem, and even suicide. Many of the issues that go hand in hand with drinking can, at some level, be resolved. However, if you spend your child's entire childhood and adolescent-hood causing them to have multiple ACEs and leave them riddled with mental disorders and mental illnesses, then that is not so easily repairable.

Of course, alcohol can kill in many ways, some of the most notable being deaths from vehicular wrecks, or eventual suicide which can be attributed to things like shame, and depression. However, these are not the only ways one can die as a consequence of alcohol consumption. Alcohol kills your liver cells, this can lead to cirrhosis of the liver, which is fatal in most cases. Consumption of alcohol can also lead to various cancers, such as liver and throat cancer, it can also lead to things such as Wernicke-Korsakoff syndrome, a rarely diagnosed but severe brain condition that is caused due to a combination of the exorbitant consumption of alcohol, along with a deficiency in vitamin B1 (thiamine).

It's not just addiction itself that can cause complications, even a single binge drinking episode can lead to an increase in the chances of getting into a vehicular wreck, an increase in

the risk of drowning, an increased risk in suicide, and if mixed with the wrong medications, it can lead to one potentially, accidentally overdosing. Not only that, no amount of drinking is safe during pregnancy, even a single drink during pregnancy can lead to fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASD). Exposing your unborn child to alcohol can cause them to develop lifelong physical disabilities, such as radioulnar synostosis, which takes place when two of the forearm bones do not connect as they should, and scoliosis, which is a sideways curvature of the spine. FASD also corresponds with having lifelong mental disabilities, such as having a low IQ or intellectual disability, it can also lead to things like hyperactive behavior and learning disabilities. Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders are the most significant causes of preventable intellectual disability and birth defects in the U.S. This statistic shows no sign of declining, in fact, the March of Dimes and the American Academy of Pediatrics states that the issue of individuals drinking during pregnancy has only increased during the past several years. Statistics can also show us that half of all AFAB people that reach child bearing age drink alcohol in some form. What's truly worrying about this is that even after discovering they are pregnant, roughly 20% of AFAB individuals will continue to drink during the continuation of their pregnancy.

Of course, as we have discussed, alcoholism is a dangerous and risky thing. Even more so than normal if you're yet to finish developing, alcohol has numerous side effects on the developing brain. In fact, any drinking while underage should be avoided, even that single drink that you partake in just to see what it's like can lead to things quickly spiraling out of control, with this single drink acting as forbidden fruit or leading to impaired judgment. This, in turn leads to a whole range of ramifications, some such conflicts being, death, or various other forms of bodily harm, as well as arrest and an increased risk of addiction or substance abuse. If you partake in binge drinking sprees while still under age, it has an alarmingly high chance of

spiraling into an addiction. Thanks to a study done by Grant BF, as well as Dawson DF, in 1997, we can see that children and adolescents who began drinking before the age of fifteen had a 41% chance of developing a dependence on alcohol in the future, in contrast, those who began drinking after reaching the legal age had only a 10% chance of abusing alcohol later in their life.

Frequent binge drinking while still under age can lead to numerous mental issues, such as low self-esteem, depression, conduct disorders, antisocial behaviors, anxiety, along with it aiding in the development of various other substance use disorders. Underage drinking can also lead to various physical issues arising, although they may be hard to see at first, as long-term health issues are harder to notice in those aged under eighteen. However, it still presents all of the same risks I had discussed earlier, it could cause you to develop things such as cancer, anemia, or cirrhosis of the liver. Studies also show that drinking while the body is still undergoing puberty can cause the bone density to not develop as it should, which can put you at risk of developing osteoporosis in your later life.

Alcohol rips families apart, leads to the loss of your physical health, it can lead to you losing your ambitions, and in many cases it can lead to the loss of life. Not just the loss of your life, it can lead to the lives of innocent bystanders being cut short. Please, for the sake of your future and the future of others, don't drink.

If you find yourself wanting to reach out for help after reading this article, I have placed some resources at the bottom. I would like to remind you that no matter how hopeless things might seem for you at the moment, it is never too late to start picking yourself back up, progress may not be linear, but eventually it will be apparent.

<https://www.aa.org/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/groups/nc/charlotte?category=addiction>

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/helplines/national-helpline>

<https://smartrecovery.org/>

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