

Assessment and Diagnosis: Mild, Moderate and Severe Drinking

The destruction caused by alcohol has been witnessed by most adults, be it in oneself, a family member, a friend, an acquaintance, or through mention in the news.

South Africa has a major problem with excessive alcohol consumption:

- The country ranks in the top 20 of 194 countries in terms of alcohol consumption per capita (World Health Organization, 2015).
- On average, a South African consumes 10–12 litres of alcohol per year, compared with a global average of 6.2 litres (South African National Council on Alcoholism, 2014).

“Am I an alcoholic?” is sadly a question we often hear. In this factsheet, we consider some of the major signs and symptoms of what people often refer to as alcoholism.

The single term **Alcohol Use Disorder** now covers the previous terms ‘alcohol abuse’ and ‘alcohol dependency’. The person with Alcohol Use Disorder does not know when or how to stop drinking, even as drinking causes serious problems in their life.

Alcohol Use Disorder is graded as **mild**, **moderate** or **severe**, depending on the symptoms. A person suffering from moderate/severe Alcohol Use Disorder may be considered an alcoholic under the old definitions of the disease.

The science of addiction is complex, but it is widely accepted that Alcohol Use Disorder is a disease of the brain. Those affected process alcohol differently to others: alcohol disrupts the brain systems relating to craving and reward. The brain becomes addicted to alcohol. It is not something to be ashamed of, but it must be treated immediately.

Alcohol addiction is progressive. If you have a drinking problem and continue to drink, it will become chronic and more difficult to treat. Ultimately, it will be life threatening. Those affected invariably need help to stop drinking. Early intervention can stop the problem escalating. It can literally save a life.

Several questionnaires are available for identifying a drinking problem. A questionnaire for detecting **Alcohol Misuse** is included overleaf. If you (or someone you know) answer YES to one or more questions, the indications are that you are misusing alcohol and need to seek expert help and/or enrol in a treatment programme. The more symptoms you have, the more urgently you need to get help. Answering YES to even one symptom can be a major risk, depending on the symptom and how severe it is.

For confirmation of Alcohol Use Disorder, click here to refer to the [DSM-V Questionnaire](#).



Surely Sober is a tried-and-tested alcohol addiction recovery programme. It is based on science and is comprehensive in extent. It is designed to treat mild, moderate or severe Alcohol Use Disorder. It supports all phases of recovery, from the first day on the road to recovery through lasting sobriety. *Surely Sober* helps an individual restructure their ‘self’ and their lifestyle. It can also provide instant support when needed.

Questionnaire for Detecting Alcohol Misuse

- 1 Have you ever decided to stop drinking for a week or more, but have only managed to do so for a couple of days? Yes No
- 2 Do you get annoyed when people confront you about your drinking and/or ask you to cut down? Yes No
- 3 Have you ever switched from one kind of drink to another in the hope that this would keep you from getting drunk? Yes No
- 4 Have you had to have an 'eye-opener' (a drink in the morning) during the past year? Yes No
- 5 Do you envy people who can drink without getting into trouble? Yes No
- 6 Have you had problems connected with drinking during the past year? Yes No
- 7 Has your drinking caused trouble at home during the past year? Yes No
- 8 Do you ever try to get 'extra' drinks at a party because you feel you are not getting enough? Yes No
- 9 Do you tell yourself you can stop drinking any time you want to, even though you keep getting drunk when you don't mean to? Yes No
- 10 Have you ever felt guilt and regret after drinking? Yes No
- 11 Have you missed days of work or school because of drinking? Yes No
- 12 Have you woken with a hangover several times in the last year? Yes No
- 13 Have you ever had a complete loss of memory as a result of drinking? Yes No
- 14 Do you ever feel that your life would be better if you did not drink? Yes No
- 15 Do you spend money that you don't have on alcohol? Yes No
- 16 Has your physician ever treated you for excessive drinking? Yes No

For a further information, assistance, or assessment, please contact our offices:
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