

## Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### Everything in Moderation!

**Coldwater, MI.** It should come as no surprise that drinking too much can harm your health. But, did you know that each year in the United States, high risk drinking has led to approximately 88,000 deaths and 2.5 million years of potential life lost? In addition, regular high risk alcohol consumption shortens lives by an average of 30 years. That's why the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants you to *'rethink about your drink'*, before you pour the next glass of your favorite alcoholic beverage.

In the United States, a standard drink contains 0.6 ounces (14.0 grams or 1.2 tablespoons) of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in:

- 12-ounces of beer (5% alcohol - micro-brewed beer is typically higher).
- 8-ounces of malt liquor (7% alcohol).
- 5-ounces of standard table wine (12% alcohol).
- 1.5-ounces of 80-proof (40% alcohol) distilled spirits or liquor (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey).

According to Prevention Research Institute, research based, low-risk guidelines for most people are defined as no more than one drink per hour, no more than two drinks a day, if drinking daily, and no more than three drinks on any given day, not to exceed fourteen drinks in any given week. The US Department of Health and Human Services' Dietary Guidelines for Americans is similar; it encourages only consuming one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men. High-risk drinking – drinking that exceeds these guidelines – occurs when a person regularly or, even on a “special occasion” drinks too many alcoholic drinks. High-risk drinking includes:

- Binge drinking, the most common form of high-risk drinking. Binge drinking is defined as consuming
  - For women, 4 or more drinks during a single occasion.
  - For men, 5 or more drinks during a single occasion.
- Any alcohol consumption by a pregnant woman
- Any alcohol consumption by a person younger than 21 years.

Theresa Christner, Health Education Director for the health department, states “According to research compiled by Prevention Research Institute, 60-70% of Americans make low-risk drinking choices most of the time. However, when people exceed these low-risk guidelines, they are engaging in high-risk drinking and are then at a higher risk for experiencing impairment and health problems.”

Impairment problems, which may result from high-risk drinking, include:

- Injuries, such as motor vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, and burns.
- Violence, including homicide, suicide, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence.
- Alcohol poisoning, a medical emergency that results from high blood alcohol levels.
- Risky sexual behaviors, including unprotected sex or sex with multiple partners. These behaviors can result in unintended pregnancy and/or sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.
- Among pregnant women, increased rates of miscarriage, stillbirth and fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs).

Over time, high-risk alcohol use can lead to the development of many chronic diseases and other serious problems. Health problems that have been connected to continued high-risk alcohol use include:

- High blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, liver disease, and digestive problems.
- Cancer of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon.
- Learning and memory problems, including dementia and poor school performance.

- Mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.
- Social problems, including lost productivity, family problems, and unemployment.
- An alcohol use disorder, and/or an addiction to alcohol.

According to the CDC, high-risk drinking was responsible for 1 in 10 deaths among working-age adults, aged 20-64 years. The economic costs of high-risk alcohol consumption in 2010 were estimated at \$249 billion, or \$2.05 a drink. By adhering to the *low-risk guidelines*, you can reduce the risk of harm to yourself and others. To learn more about the effects of alcohol use and its connection to chronic diseases, visit our partner agency websites: Branch County Substance Abuse Task Force at <http://branchcountysatf.com/> and the Hillsdale County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition at <http://www.hcsapc.org/>.

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