

Mental Health Minute

In this issue...

- * Sleep Disorders & Mental Health
- * Benefits & Risks of Alcohol Use
- * Alcohol Awareness Month
- * Did you know...
- * Outcome Corner

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Sleep Disorders *and your mental health*

The Complexities of sleep and its role in maintaining good brain, body and emotional health are becoming increasingly clear to researchers and healthcare professionals—who also find that mental disorders such as depression, anxiety and substance abuse play no small part in the epidemic levels of sleep deprived people in the United States.

Sleep is so much more than simply turning off the brain and body for periods of time. It turns out that sleep is as vital to optimal functioning as good diet and exercise. **According to experts, the value of sleep is hugely underrated in our culture.** In a global environment where it's always daylight somewhere, we are pressed to respond to demands no matter what the local time. Add to that the prevalence of stressful lifestyles, substance abuse, and mood and sleeping disorders and you end up with a lot of tired people who are functioning below capacity, at times putting themselves and others in danger.

According to the National Traffic Safety Administration, **driver drowsiness is responsible for around 100,000 motor accidents** and 1,500 deaths each year. Studies show that sleep deprived people perform as poorly as or worse than intoxicated people on hand-eye coordination tasks, and driving simulations. That, in itself, should wake us up! **Lack of sleep also negatively affects the immune and nervous systems as well as mood regulation and memory.** Chronically overtired people can expect difficulties in their relationships, in mental functions, in reaction time and judgment, and in their ability to fight infections.



Many behavioral health disorders can disrupt sleep. One of the most common symptoms of depression is frequent waking during the night or early morning awaking. Anxiety disorders including post traumatic stress disorder, panic disorders and obsessive compulsive disorder all interfere with normal sleeping patterns by preventing or interrupting sleep. Finally, alcohol and other substances are common and often unrecognized culprits in the sleep deprived picture.

Tips for a Good Night's Sleep:

- Make sure you have a comfortable mattress.
- Stamp out light with heavy curtains. Melatonin is produced in the dark.
- Quiet! Eliminate noises that may disrupt sleep.
- Stick to a regular sleeping and waking schedule.
- Find ways to relax before bed. Make relaxation part of your routine.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol in the evening.

Benefits & Risks of Alcohol

Research suggests there may be both benefits and risks to moderate drinking (drinking 1-2 drinks per day). The benefits include reducing stress and tension, improving mood, reducing the risk of heart attacks, reducing inhibitions and shyness, and improving one's ability to interact with others. However, these benefits can be achieved instead through diet and exercise.



It is important to understand the risks as well as potential benefits so that you can make a good decision about alcohol use. **If you don't drink, don't start.** Alcohol can increase the risk of stroke, cause confusion, and slow the time it takes to react to a dangerous situation while driving.

Alcohol can also interact harmfully with hundreds of medications. **Alcohol causes some drugs to be more potent than intended** and other drugs to be less effective. Certain medical problems can get worse or go unrecognized. Finally, alcohol can be addictive. Family problems and violence can result. If you or someone you know is having problems with Alcohol, please contact: Preferred Family Health at [573-632-4321](tel:573-632-4321) or Family Counseling Center at [573-634-4591](tel:573-634-4591).

Eileen Elias, Dr. Grederic Blow, Melanie Starns. [Get Connected:](#)

[Linking Older Adults with Medication, Alcohol, and Mental Health](#)

[Resources](#). Rockville, MD: DHHS Pub. No. 03-3824

Did you know...

Up to 40% of people *who drink heavily* have symptoms that resemble depressive illness.



April is Alcohol Awareness Month

When many people think of alcohol abusers, they picture teenagers sneaking drinks before high school football games or at unsupervised parties. However, alcohol abuse is prevalent within many demographic groups in the United States. People who abuse alcohol can be:

- **College students** who 'binge' drink at local bars.
- **Pregnant women** who drink and put their babies at risk for fetal alcohol syndrome.
- **Professionals** who drink after a long day of work.
- **Senior Citizens** who drink out of loneliness.

If you suspect that you might have a drinking problem, or know someone who abuses alcohol, contact *Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)* at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 or contact your nearest mental health professional.

"April is Alcohol Awareness Month." [Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration](#). 2010. USDHHS. Feb. 10, 2010. <<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/seasonal/aprilalcohol/>>

Outcome corner

Center for Behavioral Health
Inquiry Line: 573-761-2123 or 573-761-7050

St. Mary's Health Center
Central Line: 573-761-7000

St. Mary's inpatient behavioral health program is a 16 bed acute, short-term program for patients ages 18 and older in need of a secure, therapeutic environment to treat severe symptoms of an acute psychiatric diagnosis. The inpatient program is designed to quickly return patients to their optimal level of functioning through an intensive, structured, physician-supervised program that includes: psychiatric and physical assessments, 24-hour nursing and medical support, medication management and education, group therapy, access to physical and occupational therapy, individualized treatment planning, diagnostic testing, basic life skill enhancement, recreation therapy, discharge planning, family education and support, referral for follow-up services, placement assistance, and motor-skill development specific for geriatric patients.