



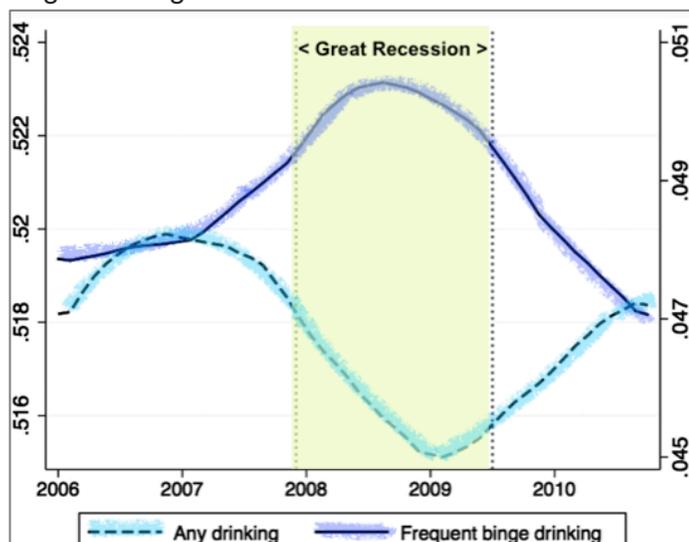
April 2020 Newsletter

April is Alcohol Awareness Month Moderation is Especially Important!

By Pamela Erickson

It's Alcohol Awareness Month and alcohol is selling like hotcakes! With most people in a "lock-down" situation, we don't know if the increase is a need to replenish supplies or a desire to numb the pain of layoff, uncertainty, sickness and death. Using alcohol as a "pain-reliever" is not a good idea in any circumstance, but during this pandemic excessive drinking can have major consequences for individual health and burdens on our systems.

There is evidence that drinking patterns change during difficult times. A study of drinking during the Great Recession found two conflicting trends. More people abstained from alcohol and those who remained in the drinking category drank at higher rates. The authors stated, "**Most concerning was a large rise in the prevalence of frequent binge drinking of 7.2% relative to baseline levels...**" The rise in frequent binge drinking was observed for both employed and unemployed respondents, suggesting that factors other than job loss were driving these changes." Below is an illustration of the drop in any drinking and the increase in frequent binge drinking.



Source: Jacob Bor, Sanjay Basu, Adam Coultts, Martin McKee, David Stuckler, *Alcohol Use During the Great Recession of 2008–2009*, *Alcohol and Alcoholism*, Volume 48, Issue 3

While drinking according to federal moderation guidelines should not be problematic, excessive drinking will make things worse. Here are some consequences:

1. Weakened immunity. You may not be aware, but excessive alcohol consumption can weaken your immune system. According to the Mayo Clinic, "Excessive alcohol use can make it harder for your body to resist disease, increasing your risk of various illnesses, **especially pneumonia.**" If you drink excessively and engage in other unhealthy practices such as smoking, poor nutrition or inactivity, things could be even worse.

2. Increasing the burden on the health care system. If you drink to the point where you experience alcohol poisoning or otherwise become ill, you may need medical care from an already stressed health care system. The burden on our system was an issue even before the COVID-19 virus pandemic. A study issued in 2018 by Aaron White and researchers at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) indicates that "The rate of alcohol-related visits to U.S. emergency departments (ED) increased by nearly 50 percent between 2006 and 2014, especially among females and drinkers who are middle-aged or older."

3. Problems that come with binge drinking: According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are several problems associated with binge drinking. They include:

- Unintentional injuries such as [car crashes](#), falls, burns, and [alcohol poisoning](#).
- Violence including homicide, suicide, intimate partner violence, and sexual assault.
- Sexually transmitted diseases.
- Unintended pregnancy and poor pregnancy outcomes, including miscarriage and stillbirth.

For more information, see www.healthyalcoholmarket.com

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- [Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders](#).
- Sudden infant death syndrome.
- Chronic diseases such as high blood pressure, stroke, heart disease, and liver disease.
- [Cancer](#) of the breast, mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, and colon.
- Memory and learning problems.
- Alcohol use disorders.

Some of these issues require attention from law enforcement and other first responders. Again, these systems are already over-burdened with managing the lockdown and other measures needed to quell the pandemic.

During this time of a pandemic and the resultant national emergency, we need everyone to commit to alcohol moderation.

So, everyone: go to this website for a refresher on how much a person can drink and remain within the moderation guidelines.
<https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>

Be well and stay safe!

Sources:

Alcohol Use Disorder:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/alcohol-use-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20369243>

“As Economy Goes Down, Drinking Goes Up”

<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/addiction/news/20111013/as-economy-goes-down-drinking-goes-up#2>

“Trends in Alcohol-Related Emergency Department Visits in the United States: Results from the Nationwide Emergency Department Sample, 2006 to 2014.” Aaron White, et al., Alcoholism, Clinical & Experimental Research, Jan 2, 2018.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29293274>

“Alcohol Use During the Great Recession of 2008–2009”

Jacob Bor, Sanjay Basu, Adam Coutts, Martin McKee, David Stuckler, Alcohol and Alcoholism, Volume 48, Issue 3, May/June 2013, Pages 343 - 348,
<https://doi.org/10.1093/alcalc/agt002>

Center for Disease Control & Prevention factsheet:

<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/binge-drinking.htm>