

# April is Alcohol Awareness Month



## Did You Know? April 2020

**Alcohol Awareness Month:** April's awareness theme aims to increase community outreach regarding the risks involved with alcohol consumption. Originating in 1987, this month-long initiative began as a way to fight stigma and advocate for alcohol use disorder prevention. Today, many of the 1987 foundational principles still hold true. This April amid the global crisis of the coronavirus, it is more crucial than ever to promote substance use prevention messages. Being quarantined leaves many Americans in an extremely vulnerable state, especially those in recovery. Isolation and anxiety open the door for alcohol and other substances to be used as coping mechanisms. This is extremely dangerous.

### What You Should Know:

- Nielsen data recently reported a significant increase in alcohol sales in conjunction with the start of COVID-19. Since March 14<sup>th</sup> wine sales have increased by 66%. Beer and cider sales increased relative to 42%. Online alcoholic purchases are currently soaring 243% above last year's sales during this time. The World Health Organization (WHO) warns that alcohol consumption lowers a user's immune system and could increase the likelihood of contracting COVID-19.
- To reduce the risk of alcohol-related harms, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend setting healthy boundaries and consuming in moderation. This means, "up to one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men—and only by adults of legal drinking age."
- The 2018 National Survey on Drug Use and Health reports that 139.8 million Americans (age 12 or older) used alcohol in the past month, 67.1 million binge drank, and 16.6 million drank at heavy/dangerous levels.
- Suffering from both mental illness (such as depression and anxiety disorders) and a substance use disorder is known as "comorbidity." The National Institute of Mental Health reports that, "... in 2014, 20.2 million adults in the U.S. had a substance use disorder and 7.9 million had both a substance use disorder and another mental illness."

### What You Can Do:

- **Fight Together:** If you are ever feeling alone or distressed, reach out to your supports! Use Facebook or social media, contact friends and family members, or even call **Crisis Services 24-hour helpline at 716-834-3131**. You are not alone.
- **Emotional Allies:** Just because we are socially distancing ourselves doesn't mean we should be emotionally distant. Be sure to keep in regular contact with anyone possibly feeling vulnerable during this pandemic (i.e. those in recovery, the elderly, those suffering from mental health disorders, etc.)
- **Keep Moving:** Turn to healthy activities to help soothe your time of isolation. Try incorporating yoga, exercise, painting, reading, etc. Use this as an opportunity to try things you may have never had time to do before. Keeping yourself busy with healthy activities limits the opportunity to use substances and participate in other risky behaviors.
- **Free Tools:** To combat the fear and mental turmoil COVID-19 has caused, many mindfulness apps and services have reduced their cost to allow for greater accessibility. For example, the popular app Headspace recently waived their subscription fees for users during this pandemic.
- **Monitor:** If you do choose to consume alcohol legally during this time, keep track of how much and how often you are consuming. Take care of your body and drink within the guidelines of what is healthiest for you.

*Information obtained from:* [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov); [www.euro.who.int](http://www.euro.who.int); [www.nielsen.com](http://www.nielsen.com); [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov); [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov); [www.thedrinksbusiness.com](http://www.thedrinksbusiness.com)

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