

## High Tolerance

Understanding the implications of being able to drink large quantities of alcohol, unfortunately, is a counter-intuitive proposition. While it may seem advantageous to be able to “hold his liquor” (or hers,) drinking large quantities, i.e. more than three equiv. ozs. for a man, two for a woman begins a toxic, progressive poisoning process that inevitably results in damaged health, impaired cognitive abilities and emotional sickness. It is not possible to drink significant amounts of alcohol, even on a periodic basis, and remain healthy. The rates of deterioration depends on individual factors, but the outcome is a chemical certainty. Heavy drinking, even occasional binges, is THE singular basis of eventual alcoholism, addiction and 99.9% of all alcohol problems.

Most people (85% of those who drink) can not drink very much. They quickly become intoxicated, staggering drunk, tired, pass out, throw up and have horrible hangovers the next day. Their bodies can not ‘tolerate’ much alcohol. We know these people. They have a couple of drinks, some fun for a couple of hours, then they’re done. They go home. They don’t have problems related to their drinking. Why is it then that a few drink so much? Consider this - 15% of the people who drink - drink 70% of the booze. Are you one of them? You don’t get tired - you get energized, you can keep drinking and drinking and drinking. You love it. You don’t get sick, you’re OK the next day. You’ve known from the beginning that your drinking is different from most other people.

How can these people drink so much, not lose all their coordination, not pass out, not get sick and not have awful, painful hangovers the next day? Strange. Yet these are the people who become dependent, addicted, can’t stop - once they begin, feel OK to drive and have ALL the serious problems. They don’t intend to have these problems that ultimately ruin their lives and those of people around them whom they love the most. Each time they experience a problem, they promise it’ll be the last - but they go back to drinking again, can’t limit it and sooner or later, have more and more serious consequences - Why?

Heavy and or problem drinking is not a choice. It’s not a symptom of a mental health problem. It’s not a morality problem. It’s not a bad decision. It’s not because you are depressed, bi-polar, have PTSD, ADHD, anxiety, bad parents, bad relationships, attachment disorders, low self-esteem, a lousy boss, friends who drink a lot, too much stress or are stupid or irresponsible. It has nothing to do with any of these things - NOTHING.

It is a unique response of your personal chemistry to a powerful toxic chemical solvent that has no business being consumed at all by living organisms. Your high tolerance is about chemistry. You can’t help it, you can’t change it. Almost always, it is inherited from someone in the family (anyone - grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc.) If anyone in your biological background had it, your odds of inheriting it are 50-50. Learning or environment, looks intelligence, personality, whether or not you were breast-fed, etc. - have nothing to do with it. It is a specific chemical response to alcohol only.

How do we know this? It’s been clearly researched and demonstrated in animal studies. At the University of Colorado, Neuroscience Dept., they have bred strains of high tolerance mice. They have demonstrated the differences in behavior and, under the microscope, have SEEN consistent differences in the brain chemistry and physiology of high tolerance mice. They controlled ALL the learning and environmental factors. They didn’t traumatize the mice, make them feel guilty, anxious or sad or do anything different to them - pure inheritability. There were no other differences in the mice - only their response to alcohol.

The mice were exactly the same type, breed, etc. They injected them with alcohol, same amount, same type, and same place. The low tolerance mice passed out immediately - unconscious. The high tolerance mice raced

around, disorganized, hyperactive, out of control. For the high tolerance mice, alcohol is not a depressant, anesthetic drug - it's a stimulant. All of the observed differences in their little brains tended to go from more sedated to more stimulated. The chemistry was completely consistent with their behavior - trial after trial after trial. Other labs examined the mice and found the behavior and underlying chemistry to be completely consistent. Why did this research never gain much attention? It still is not common knowledge and I had to hunt and hunt and hunt for it over 10 years of graduate school - but it is there.

All animals, from snail's to people's brains work exactly the same way, use exactly the same chemicals and processes. Mice are excellent and very reliable models for human functioning. You, yourself have seen the same differences in behavior between people who drink a lot and those who drink a little. All the problems with drinking come with the quantity. It's not that mysterious. It does make sense. Most of the people who come to BAEC with problems, offenses, etc. have a high tolerance. Please think about it. If you want more details about the research, the mice, the chemistry - ask us, or come see me.

If you have a high tolerance - you WILL need to deal with it. In most cases, people find that stopping drinking completely is the simplest and surest answer. No drinking - no drinking problem. We know this is not an easy choice. No one wants to have to face this. If you need to try to control/moderate your drinking first - we'll try to help you through this in a way that you can clearly find out if it will work. Set a reasonable limit - see if you can stick to it. Unfortunately, only a very minute number of people have success with this. Tolerance is built in, very strong and, at some point, they lose control, often when they expect it least, drink too much and have problems again, as bad as or worse than before.

At BAEC, we are here to help you. We will address and work on all your issues and concerns, take it at your pace, respect your individuality, privacy and dignity, but we would rather not keep you around forever - so if the shoe fits.....

With All Best Wishes,

Dr. John Gilbert, Director