

# **BOULDER ALCOHOL EDUCATION CENTER**

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## **Signs of Problem Drinking**

1. **EXCESSIVE DRINKING:** Drinking enough to cause negative events and consequences.
2. **HIGH TOLERANCE:** Measured by Blood Alcohol Level. Needing to drink more and more to get the desired effects. Being able to “hold your liquor.” Ability to drink a lot and not appear obviously “drunk” or get sick, or pass out. Ability to drink others “under the table.”
3. **LOSS OF CONTROL:** Difficulty stopping drinking after the first few. Periodic heavy drinking occasions / binges. Drinking more than intended. Frequently drunk. Tendency to keep drinking once begun. Not wanting to stop after a couple.
4. **BLACKOUTS:** Inability to remember things that happened during a period of time spent drinking i.e. last night, last weekend. May experience partial or “fuzzy” loss.
5. **PREOCCUPATION WITH DRINKING:** Social life always involves alcohol. Thinks and talks a lot about drinking “war stories.” Looks forward to drinking. Interested more and more in drinking, less in everything and everyone else. Plans events around drinking. Decrease in non-drinking activities, hobbies, etc.
6. **PERSONALITY CHANGES:** Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Becoming overly “sociable.” Quiet to aggressive, depressed to elated or more depressed, friendly to belligerent. A distinct and exaggerated change in attitude and behavior when intoxicated. Doing things you would not normally do. Inappropriate emotional displays.
7. **DRINKING FOR RELIEF:** To relax, forget, calm down, cope better, improve your mood, overcome shyness or anxiety, numb or change strong or bad feelings, to aid sleep, to have sex. Drinking when angry, sad or uptight. Self-medicating with alcohol.
8. **OBSESSIVE / COMPULSIVE DRINKING:** Unable to not drink, automatically drinking. Nothing more important than drinking. Lets nothing interfere with drinking, anxious to start drinking. Drinks at inappropriate times, bottle in the desk, car, pocket.
9. **DENIAL:** Alibis, excuses, “reasons” for getting drunk. Minimizing or lying about drinking or its consequences. Rationalizing getting drunk. Blaming drinking on external causes, i.e. “the wife’s big mouth,” the boss, pain, tension, reasons to “celebrate”, the Broncos won (or lost.) Avoiding responsibility for problems caused by drinking. Results of denial are always continued, or more drinking.
10. **GULPING / SNEAKING DRINKS:** Trying to hide the amounts, frequency, and urgency of drinking. Guilty feelings, drinking alone in “secret.” Having a few before the party. Avoiding others when drinking, alcohol replaces other relationships.

11. PROTECT THE SUPPLY: Making sure not to run out, hiding booze, having a stash for emergencies. Stocking up to get through Sunday.
12. CHANGING THE PATTERN: Trying to change the drinking, switching from liquor to beer or wine. Trying to quit or cut down. Moving, quitting jobs, leaving a relationship with the idea that the change will fix the problem or help the drinking.
13. LOSS OF FRIENDS, FAMILY OR JOB: People concerned, angry, worried about your drinking. Inability to fulfill responsibilities, promises, commitments, expectations.
14. UNREASONABLE RESENTMENTS: Projecting failures, disappointments, bad feelings onto others. "It's not my fault, I couldn't help it." "The system sucks." Feeling victimized and mistreated by others. Distrustful, suspicious, jealous.
15. BINGES AND BENDERS: Drinking over long periods of time, i.e. "drunk all weekend," interspersed with periods of abstinence or moderate drinking.
16. LOSS OF INTEREST IN OTHER ACTIVITIES: Unless accompanied by drinking.
17. ANTI-SOCIAL INTOXICATED BEHAVIOR: Obnoxious, destructive, impulsive, violent, dangerous, aggressive, inappropriate behavior when drinking. Legal problems and consequences. Gross stimulation and Disinhibition.
18. EYE OPENER: Morning drinking, needing a drink after a period of not drinking, i.e. sleep, to stop the shakes or to calm the agitation and discomfort of the Rebounds. Struggling to wait till lunch or after work to begin drinking.
19. PHYSICAL DETERIORATION: Loss of energy, conditioning, muscle tone. Sleep problems, broken blood vessels, beer belly, high blood pressure, ulcers, stroke, impotence, infertility, diabetes, organ deterioration, and brain damage.
20. PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS: Agitated, depression, irritability, anxiety, difficulty coping and resolving everyday issues, procrastinating, vague fears, sleep problems, delusions of grandeur, manipulating and trying to control others, loss of empathy and consideration, memory problems, impatience, quick temper, remorse, guilt, "fuzzy" thinking. Intense, overwhelming jealousy and distrust.
21. WITHDRAWALS: Hangovers, shakes, sweats, heart palpitations, seizures, elevated temperature and blood pressure. Extreme nervous system "Rebounds." Rebounds last three times as long as the amount of time spent drinking and intoxicated.

**Drinking problems are easy to recognize. Admitting you have one is hard.  
Facing a drinking problem is taking the biggest step towards solving it.**