Most people drink alcohol moderately, within their limits. Others overdo it occasionally. But some people find they can’t control their drinking. How do you know when drinking is becoming a problem? And what can you do if it is?

Alcohol problems come from drinking too much, too fast, or too often. When alcohol-dependent people try to stop drinking, they may feel anxious and irritable—so they may drink again and it becomes a vicious cycle.

Signs of an alcohol problem include drinking more, or more often, than you intended, or making unsuccessful attempts to cut back or quit. People with alcohol problems often have trouble functioning at work, home, or school.

Studies show that most people with an alcohol-use disorder can benefit from some form of treatment. If the problem is more serious, the doctor can help create a treatment plan, prescribe medications, or refer the person to a specialist, a treatment clinic, or in-patient addiction center.

If the treatment plan created by your healthcare team is working, it’s important to stick to the plan. Many people repeatedly try to cut back or quit drinking, have a setback, then try to quit again. Think of an alcohol relapse as a temporary setback and keep persisting toward full recovery.

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