

## YORK CONNECTION

Alcohol is a drug. It has a direct effect on the central nervous system of the body. The old expression, "It went straight to my head..." is true, because alcohol travels through the bloodstream to the brain, where it has an effect within a few minutes.

It is a mood-modifying drug which acts as a depressant on the system. It makes you relaxed and less conscious of events around you.

Alcohol is less expensive, in relation to income, than it has ever been before. A 1977 survey, conducted by the Addiction Research Foundation, showed 82 per cent of those Ontario respondents age 18 or more had consumed alcohol at least once during the preceding year. A 1979 survey of drug use by students in grades 7 to 13 revealed that 77 per cent of them had used alcohol within the previous twelve months. Alcohol use among students did not increase between 1977-79 according to Foundation survey.

The short-term effects of alcohol include initial relaxation; loss of inhibitions; impaired coordination; slowing down of reflexes and mental processes (reactions); attitude changes; increased risk-taking to point of bad judgment and danger.

Combining alcohol with antihistamines (cold, cough, and allergy remedies), marijuana, tranquilizers, barbituates, or other "sleeping pills" can intensify the effects of these drugs to a dangerous degree. Many

accidental deaths have been attributed to the combined use of alcohol and other drugs.

Regular use of alcohol induces tolerance, making increased doses necessary to produce the same effects. When tolerance develops, alcohol dependent people may drink steadily throughout the day without appearing to be intoxicated. Because they may continue to work reasonably well, their condition may go unrecognized until severe physical damage develops, or until they experience alcohol withdrawal symptoms (if confined to bed or hospitalized for some other reason.)

Consistently heavy drinkers are likely to become both psychologically and physically dependent on alcohol. Psychological dependence exists when a drug is so central to a person's thoughts, emotions and activities that it is extremely difficult to stop using it. This condition is marked by a compelling need or craving to keep taking the drug. Physical dependence is a state wherein the body has adapted to the presence of alcohol and withdrawal symptoms occur if its use is stopped abruptly. The symptoms range from jumpiness to tremors, convulsions and hallucinations, and possibly death.

Pregnant women who drink bear the added risk of producing babies with some or all of the abnormalities associated with the fetal alcohol syndrome. The most serious of these include mental deficiency, head and facial deformities, joint and limb



abnormalities and cardiac defects. The risk of bearing an FAS-afflicted child increases with the amount of alcohol consumed, and is thought to be related to the maximum blood alcohol level reached in pregnant women.

Some advise instituting differential taxation to encourage "drinks of moderation." This is based on the theory that beer drinkers are less prone to alcoholism. This however is simply not borne out in a vast number of studies, and in fact, in some countries and in certain parts of Ontario, beer is the principal and sometimes exclusive beverage used by many alcoholics. It is not the type of alcoholic beverage, but the total consumption of absolute alcohol that really matters. One bottle of regular beer (5 per cent alcohol by volume) is equal to three and two-thirds ounces of port (16 to 20 per cent alcohol) or one and one-half ounces of distilled spirits (40 per cent of

## Alcohol impairs

alcohol).

Problem drinking is not the same thing as intoxication, and not every problem drinker, or alcoholic, is a drunk. Some alcoholics are drinking a small amount too often rather than too much at a time.

Alcoholism is the nation's number one drug problem. Alcohol is involved in over 50 per cent of deaths due to traffic accidents in Canada.

In 1969 11 per cent of the total number of deaths in Ontario were alcoholics. The alcoholic had twice the chance of premature death than had the non-alcoholic person. Research has found that in terms of health and social costs, alcohol-related problems are responsible for more than 10 per cent of expenditures in general public hospitals; more than 15 per cent in mental hospitals; approximately 20 per cent of the expenditures under the Family Benefit Act; and 30 per cent of expenditures for Children's Aid Societies.

In terms of absolute costs based on 1971 figures, the Ontario taxpayer paid \$89 million through Ontario Hospital Insurance Plan for illness related to alcoholism; almost \$17 million through the mental hospital system; almost \$9 million through the Family Benefits Act; and over \$11 million through Children's Aid Societies for activities attributed to alcoholism.

Help for the problem drinker may also be obtained from

Alcoholics Anonymous. This is a fellowship of men and women who share their experience with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others to recover from alcoholism.

All one needs to become a member is the desire to stop drinking. There are no dues or fees for A.A. membership; they are self-supporting through their own contributions. A.A. is not allied with any organization or denomination, neither endorses nor opposes any causes. The primary purposes of its members is to stay sober and help other alcoholics to achieve sobriety.

While there is no known "cure" for alcoholism, alcoholics can put an end to this progressive illness by learning how to stop drinking—and can recover.

### NOTICE

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Bachelor of  
Education  
at Queen's University



Careers in  
Teaching

Information Meeting

Location ROSS BUILDING  
South 105

Date Thurs. Time 1-3 P.M.  
Nov. 27

Rum flavoured.  
Wine dipped.

# Crack a pack of Colts along with the beer.