April is National Alcohol Awareness Month

Most people who drink alcohol do so without harmful effects. For many others, the consequences can be devastating. Here are some important facts that the EAP would like you to know.

What is a safe level of drinking?

For most adults, moderate alcohol use—up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older people—causes few if any problems. (One drink equals one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.)

However, certain people should not drink at all. They include women who are pregnant or trying to become pregnant, people who plan to drive or engage in other activities requiring alertness and skill, people taking certain over-the-counter or prescription medications, people with medical conditions that can be worsened by drinking, recovering alcoholics, and people under the age of 21.

What is alcohol abuse?

If you answer “yes” to any of the following questions, you may have a problem with alcohol.

- Do you drink alone when you feel angry or sad?
- Does your drinking ever make you late for work?
- Does your drinking worry your family?
- Do you ever forget what you did while drinking?
- Do you get headaches or have a hangover after drinking?

What is alcoholism?

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is a disease that includes the following four symptoms:

- **Craving** - A strong need, or urge, to drink.
- **Loss of control** - Not being able to stop drinking once drinking has begun.
- **Physical dependence** - Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after stopping drinking.
- **Tolerance** - The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get "high."
You are the most powerful influence on your child’s behavior.

Society gives children mixed messages about alcohol. Make sure that your children get their information from the best resource available – you.

- Many kids start drinking in middle school.
- One out of every two 8th graders has tried alcohol.
- More kids use alcohol than use tobacco or illicit drugs.
- More children are killed by alcohol than all illegal drugs combined.
- Children who begin drinking alcohol before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely than those who start after age 21 to develop alcohol problems.
- The chances of becoming dependent decrease by 14% for each year of delay in the onset of alcohol use.

Alcohol affects older people differently.

Alcohol’s effects do vary with age. Slower reaction times, problems with hearing and seeing, and a lower tolerance to alcohol’s effects put older people at higher risk for falls, car crashes, and other types of injuries that may result from drinking.

Older people also tend to take more medicines than younger people. Mixing alcohol with over-the-counter or prescription medications can be very dangerous, even fatal. In addition, alcohol can make many of the medical conditions common in older people, including high blood pressure and ulcers, more serious. To be safe, older men and women should limit themselves to one drink per day.

Sources: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration
http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/seasonal/aprilalcohol

Help is readily available for anyone concerned about their own, or someone else’s, drinking.

A great place to start is the Employee Assistance Program. EAP services are free, confidential, and available to all employees, as well as their dependents and household members.

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon are also excellent resources.

AllOne Health Employee Assistance Program
800-451-1834