What is binge drinking?

Binge drinking is when someone drinks a large amount of alcohol in a short period (about 2 hours). Binge drinking, the most common form of excessive alcohol use, is defined as consuming 4 or more drinks during a single occasion (about 2 hours) for women and 5 or more drinks during a single occasion (about 2 hours) for men. Most people who binge drink are not alcohol dependent. Binge drinking is unsafe for everyone.

A drink is defined as 5-ounces of wine, 12-ounces of regular beer or wine cooler, 8-ounces of malt liquor, 1.5-ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor (i.e. gin, rum, vodka, whiskey).

How common is adult binge drinking?

- One in six U.S. adults binge drinks about four times a month, consuming about eight drinks per binge.
- Age group with most binge drinkers: 18-34 years
- Binge drinking is more common among those with household incomes of $75,000 or more than among those with lower incomes.
- Approximately 92% of U.S. adults who drink excessively report binge drinking in the past 30 days.
- Binge drinking among men is twice that among women.
- More than half of the alcohol consumed by adults in the U.S. is in the form of binge drinks.

Are there problems associated with binge drinking?

Binge drinking is associated with many health and social problems, including:

- Unintentional injuries (e.g. car crashes, falls, burns, drowning)
- Intentional injuries (e.g. firearm injuries; sexual assault, including date & acquaintance rape; domestic violence)
- Unintended pregnancy
- Children born with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- High blood pressure, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases
- Poor performance in school or at work
- Alcohol poisoning
- Liver disease
- Sexual dysfunction
- Violence
- Neurological damage
- Sexually transmitted diseases
- Poor control of diabetes
- Legal problems (DUI, etc.)

Drinking too much, including binge drinking, causes 80,000 deaths in the U.S. each year.
What are the dangers of binge drinking?

Binge drinking harms your brain, liver and pancreas; raises the risk for cancer of the liver, mouth, throat and voice box; and can also cause weight gain and high blood pressure. Binge drinking also has other dangers such as poor choices, unprotected sexual activity, unintended pregnancy, mood changes, etc.

What is alcohol poisoning?

Alcohol poisoning is a severe and life-threatening reaction to drinking a large amount of alcohol at one time.

What are symptoms of alcohol poisoning?

Symptoms of alcohol poisoning include mental confusion, passing out and not waking up, seizures, slow breathing (fewer than 8 breaths per minute) or irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths), severe vomiting (may happen even when sleeping), and cold, clammy or blue skin.

Alcohol poisoning can cause the brain to shut down, breathing to stop, choking on his/her own vomit, or can cause coma or death.

If someone has been drinking and shows any signs of alcohol poisoning, call 911 immediately. It is a medical emergency.

What can be done about binge drinking?

Everyone can help prevent binge drinking. People can:

- Choose not to binge drink themselves and help others make the same choice.
- Drink in moderation when drinking. The U.S. Dietary Guidelines recommend no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men. Pregnant women and underage youth should not drink alcohol.
- Support the minimum legal drinking age of 21 by not buying or supplying alcohol for minors.

Resources:

Oakland County Health Division/Office of Substance Abuse Services (OCHD/OSAS)
http://www.oakgov.com/healthprogram_services/sas_about.html
248-858-5200

PACE Program (Prior Authorization and Central Evaluation Program)
PACE is the first step to substance abuse treatment services for income eligible residents in Oakland County. 248-858-5200 or 888-350-0900, ext. 85200

Alcohol and Drug Abuse
Alcoholics Anonymous .............................................................. 248-332-3521
Alanon .......................................................... 248-706-1020
Narcotics Anonymous .......................................................... 248-543-7200
Program and Prevention Information ......................................... 248-858-0001
Treatment Information PACE .................................................. 1-888-350-0900, ext. 85200

The Oakland County Health Division will not deny participation in its programs based on race, sex, religion, national origin, age or disability. State and federal eligibility requirements apply for certain programs.