



# Recognizing Alcohol Abuse/Dependency

## **What is alcohol abuse?**

- Heavy drinking for women is 3 or more drinks per day.
- A binge for women consists of three or more drinks on any occasion.
- Alcoholics are women who depend emotionally or physically on alcohol and have:
  - Preoccupation with drinking
  - Craving for alcohol
  - Need for more drinks to feel the effects
  - Shakiness, seizures, or hallucinations after drinking is stopped (withdrawal)

## **When does a woman have a problem with alcohol?**

Alcoholism is a problem if 3 or more of the following occur in 1 year:

- Social, occupational or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of alcohol use
- Alcohol is consumed in larger amounts over a longer period than intended
- You are unable to stop or cut down drinking
- Drinking is continued despite knowing that it will cause physical or social problems
- Spending lots of time making sure you have what you need to drink, drinking, or recovering from the effects



## Questions ?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. UWMC Clinic staff are also available to help at any time.

To find a UW Physicians clinic near you, please call 1-800-UW-DOCS.

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- Nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety when alcohol is stopped after a period of heavy drinking (withdrawal symptoms)
- Increasing amounts of alcohol are needed to feel its effects

### Do you have a problem with alcohol?

**CAGE** is a four-item questionnaire representing the terms: **C**ut back, **A**nnoyed, **G**uilty, and **E**ye-opener. For women, one or more positive responses may indicate a problem with alcohol.

Ask yourself the following:

1. Have you ever felt the need to reduce the level of your alcohol consumption?
2. Have people ever annoyed you with their criticisms of your drinking habits?
3. Have you ever felt guilty while you were drinking?
4. Have you ever started the day with a drink either to wake yourself up, in order to relax, or to cure a hangover?

From: Ewing, J.A.(1984) Detecting alcoholism: the CAGE questionnaire. *JAMA*, 252:1905-1907.



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