

Transcript for New Study Finds People are Drinking Too Much

SOT-Susanne Ringhausen, Manager Health and Psychological Services for OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center in Alton

“You know there’s anxiety, lots of life changes, people are self-isolating so there’s loneliness, boredom and that kind of anxiety and stress can trigger that kind of drinking escalation. We would call that “relief drinking.” (:15)

Ringhausen says you don't have to be an alcoholic for alcohol consumption to have a negative impact on your life.

“Where someone might have increased tolerance for alcohol, meaning as they drink more they *need* to drink more to have the same effect on their body and mind and so someone with Alcohol Use Disorder might experience that sudden urge to drink and really start to avoid non-alcohol related activities with other people.” (:22)

Ringhausen says heavy drinking can lead to more risky behavior when it comes to COVID-19 precautions.

“As our inhibitions go down and our drinking goes up, people can ignore the CDC guidelines for masking and physical distancing. And safe practices ... some of that goes out the window and that’s where you’re seeing in the news, it’s (the virus spread) escalating and where intoxication is contributing to that.” (:26)

Ringhausen suggests looking for more positive outlets to relieve stress and help you cope during these strange and unpredictable times.

“Exercise routines or even fun scrapbooking activities or any kind of hobby you could imagine could be done virtually via Zoom so it does not have to revolve around drinking.” (:15)

Six months into the pandemic, health leaders who are worried about the lasting impact of this big spike in drinking say it might be a good time to reflect on your habits.

“If you see yourself slipping into a bad pattern, take a break. Just take a break from drinking and maybe don’t keep it in the house for a while and that’ll help you cut back or get back on track. Let other friends and family know you’re cutting back. That will be helpful to get some support.” (:16)

If you find yourself drinking excessively on a regular basis, Ringhausen stresses, there is support to help you make a positive change.

“You’re not alone. I want people to know it’s easy to access help. Contact OSF; we have behavioral health navigators as well as behavioral health counseling available when people want to consult and just go over an issue that’s going on in their life. It can be just one time or they come in for a few sessions to get a handle on a life issue. But, they are not alone.” (:25)