

## [Problem drinking](#),

California

U.S. Industry Average

[Problem drinking](#), including alcoholism, can strike anyone employed by your company. This calculator estimates how many employees and their family members have alcohol problems and how many still need treatment.

## The U.S. Industry Average:

Number of Employees:	100
Likely number of <a href="#">problem drinkers</a> in your workforce:	9
Likely number of employees' family members who are <a href="#">problem drinkers</a> :	11

## What is Problem Drinking?

Problem drinking is using alcohol in ways that are harmful to the drinker or to others. People who are problem drinkers may have the disease of alcoholism or may drink in ways that lead to health or safety problems for themselves or to others. The Alcohol Cost Calculator developed by Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems focuses on the most severe types of problem drinking — alcohol dependence and alcohol abuse.

## What is Alcohol Dependence or Alcoholism?

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence or alcohol addiction, is a chronic disease with four primary symptoms:

- *Craving*: A strong need or compulsion to drink.
- *Loss of control*: The inability to limit one's drinking on any given occasion.
- *Physical dependence*: Withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety occur when alcohol use is stopped after a period of heavy drinking.
- *Tolerance*: The need to drink greater amounts of alcohol over time in order to get high.

## What is Alcohol Abuse?

During the course of a year, a person who meets diagnostic criteria of alcohol abuse will experience at least one of the following drinking-related problems:

- Inability to fulfill major work, school or home responsibilities;
- Drinking in situations that are physically dangerous, such as while driving a car or operating machinery;
- Having recurring alcohol-related legal problems, such as being arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or for physically hurting someone while drunk; or
- Continuing to drink despite having ongoing relationship problems that are caused or worsened by the drinking.

## What are other types of problem drinking?

The Alcohol Cost Calculator provides estimates of the likely number of people who have an alcohol use disorder — either alcohol dependence or alcohol abuse. There is a broader spectrum of alcohol-related drinking patterns that can cause grave problems for individuals, families, employers, and communities. Experts now understand that people can drink in a wide range of unhealthy and unsafe ways — from occasionally having as little as a single drink and then driving to being addicted to alcohol — and that unsafe drinking takes a toll in the workforce and at home. The total impact of the spectrum of problem drinking to a company, its employees and their families is likely to be greater than the results shown by the Alcohol Cost Calculator.

## What is Heavy Drinking?

Federal government surveys characterize heavy drinking as having five or more drinks on at least five occasions during a month, but it is important to remember that alcohol problems can and do occur at much lower levels of consumption.

## What is Binge Drinking?

Drinking five or more drinks on at least one occasion during a month is considered binge drinking. When heavy drinkers consume five or more drinks on a single occasion, they are bingeing, but not everyone who binges is a heavy drinker. Binge drinking puts individuals at serious risk for an alcohol problem.

## What is Risky Drinking?

Drinking in ways that are likely to lead to trauma or adverse health effects, including alcoholism, is considered risky drinking.

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When left untreated, alcohol problems among employees increase absenteeism, reduce productivity and make it more difficult for coworkers to do their jobs. One survey found that 20 percent of workers say they have been injured, had to cover for a coworker, or needed to work harder because of other employees' drinking. Untreated alcohol problems also increase health care costs among employees and their family members.

Likely number of work days lost to sickness, injury and absence because of problem drinking	23 days
Cost of lost days	\$2,880
Likely alcohol-related health care costs	\$31,883
Emergency Room Visits	2
Hospital Stays	1

Emergency Department and Hospital Costs

\$5,714

The impact and cost of untreated alcohol problems [extend far beyond the workplace.](#)

To find out what you can do to help, [Click Here.](#)

## Untreated Alcohol Problems Threaten the Lives of Employees and Their Families

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Untreated alcohol problems do much more than reduce productivity and increase health care costs. They also expose employees and their families to greater risk in their daily lives.

**Compared to employees without alcohol problems, those with alcohol problems are significantly more likely to experience health problems related to their drinking. In the last year, there are likely to have been:**

- 3 more employees and family members with a serious problem with another [drug](#)
- 2 more employees and family members with a serious [mental illness](#)
- 3 more employees and family members more likely to [smoke](#)

Employees are more likely to get arrested or be involved in violence when they have alcohol problems.

**Compared to people without alcohol problems:**

- 2 more employees and family members are likely to have been [arrested in the past year](#)
- 11 more employees and family members are likely to [drive under the influence](#) of alcohol and other drugs

- 1 more employee or family member is likely to have [committed an act of domestic violence](#) within the past year
- 1 more employee or family member is likely to have been a [victim of domestic violence](#) within the past year

## What Can You Do?

Use this [calculator](#). See for yourself the impact on your own business...

Armed with information from The Alcohol Cost Calculator for Business, you can strengthen your company's programs. You can implement low-cost, high-gain practices to improve health outcomes and constrain costs.

### Cover alcohol problems – and control health care costs as a result.

By providing alcohol treatment for employees, businesses can improve health and increase productivity while cutting down on costs of health care and personnel.

Workers and their families who have untreated alcohol problems cost their companies because they are likely to miss more days of work and require more emergency hospital care and longer hospital stays. Health care costs for employees who have alcohol problems are twice as high as for those who do not. In this period of rapidly escalating benefit costs, when businesses are paying more attention to health promotion and disease management, improvement of alcohol treatment is an important part of the cost-saving equation.

### Solutions to Alcohol Problems

- Build greater [awareness](#) of how to deter harmful alcohol problems, including through the establishment of clear company policies

- Increase expectation of value from company [health benefits](#) to improve the provision of alcohol treatment
- Establish the basic tools for [employee assistance](#)

Employers Addressing Alcohol Problems Save By

## Increasing Awareness of Alcohol Issues

Along with strengthening health benefits and employee assistance programs, businesses can help employees at all levels of the company to become more aware of the consequences of and solutions to problem drinking.

[Establish and Disseminate Treatment-Friendly Policies](#). Employees should know that they work in a place with treatment-oriented workplace policies. Company policies about alcohol and drug use, employee assistance services and health benefits should be highlighted in new employee orientation, company newsletters, personnel handbooks and similar corporate communications.

[The Department of Labor](#) and the [Center for Substance Abuse Prevention](#) have very helpful guidance in establishing treatment-oriented workplace policies.

[Promoting Health and Wellness](#). Many companies make alcohol problem awareness part of their overall health education program.

[Detecting and Treating Alcohol Problems Early](#). Through workplace screening and short sessions of counseling, called brief interventions, employees can become more aware of their own drinking habits and problems can be addressed before they become more intractable.

## Other Solutions

Improve Alcohol Treatment Health Insurance Benefits

Assist Employees Facing Alcohol Problems