

Alcohol

[How can you tell if someone is suffering from alcohol poisoning? ►](#)

The signs of alcohol poisoning are similar to other poisoning symptoms: very intoxicated, nausea, unconsciousness. There is enough alcohol in their blood and no other reasons can be found upon examination.

Alcohol has a paralysing effect on the system. A small amount of alcohol first paralyses inhibitions, which relaxes many people and makes it easier for them to socialise. A larger amount has a greater paralysing effect which may be manifested in decreasing ability to think, speak and control one's balance and movements. Nausea and vomiting may be signs that alcohol poisoning is imminent and the body is trying to get rid of the alcohol in the stomach. In alcohol poisoning the paralysing effects of alcohol are so great that the person is no longer capable of taking care of him/herself and may become unconscious. Similar symptoms may appear also in connection with other poisonings, head injuries, diabetes or serious infections.

If you can wake up the person who you suspect is suffering from alcohol poisoning, you should ask them directly what they have been drinking (or using) and how much. Sometimes you can get this information from the person's companion or friend. You cannot know based on the symptoms alone whether the person is suffering from alcohol poisoning. As alcohol poisoning is a life-threatening condition, you should not hesitate to contact a health centre or call the emergency number to ask what measures should be taken.

[What are the symptoms of pancreatitis? ►](#)

An acute pancreatitis usually begins with severe pain of the upper abdomen, with the pain possibly also radiating to the back. Nausea and vomiting may occur. Sometimes, a sudden deterioration in the general condition after large-scale or long-term alcohol use may be a sign of pancreatitis. There is also a recurring or chronic form of pancreatitis that manifests itself in recurring upper abdominal pains and diarrhoea. Years later this may lead to steatorrhea, weight loss and diabetes. The most common cause of pancreatitis in Finland is alcohol use.

[What are normal liver readings for men/women? ►](#)

There are many kinds of liver readings. The most common tests are ALAT, ASAT and GT. Only one of these readings or all of them may be elevated. What exactly is considered a normal liver reading depends on the laboratory. As a general rule, readings under 50 are normal for women and readings under 60 normal for men.

[What are the symptoms of cirrhosis of the liver? ►](#)

Cirrhosis of the liver may in its early stages be without symptoms. When the disease is advanced, it may cause fatigue, jaundice of the skin and eyes and swelling of the abdomen. Alcohol induced inflammation of the liver may precede cirrhosis. The symptoms of the inflammation include abdominal pains, jaundice of the skin and eyes and itching of the skin.

[Can you drink alcohol if you use antidepressants? ►](#)

Several different medicines and/or medicine groups are used for depression treatment in Finland. Some of these medications are incompatible with alcohol, while others have even been studied to see if they could be used to treat alcohol addiction. Based on these studies, you can use alcohol if the medicinal substance in your medication is fluoxetine or citalopram. However, if you are being treated for depression, alcohol use cannot be recommended. The use of alcohol may lead to increased depression and panic symptoms, as well as, increase the risk of suicide.

[Alcohol use when your children are young ►](#)

I'm feeling bad about my alcohol use. I should probably be the happiest person on earth. I have two wonderful children, aged 6 months and 3 years, and a good husband. But for some reason I just feel so empty. We argue very easily and I feel like I have to take time off to relax. Usually this means that I meet my friends 2 – 6 times a month for a night out. The night passes merrily and almost always I drink too much, i.e. I can't remember much. My husband has no understanding for such things. He thinks I would not have a problem if I simply decided not to drink.

Does my alcohol use harm my children? I want to be a good mother and I love my children very much, but I don't always have the energy for it all. What could I do about my drinking? I don't think I'm an alcoholic, at least not yet. I already feel horrible and very guilty. I would like to change but don't know how.

The Answer:

Your two children are still very young so it is no wonder that you feel tired and bored; life seems to consist of nothing more than cooking and taking care of the children. Often the situation is made worse by the fact that men and husbands do not realise that the mother is exhausted and frustrated. When you are tired, even small, insignificant things may lead to arguments.

It would be a good idea to discuss matters with your husband and try to arrange time for yourself and your hobbies a few nights every week. It is also essential that you and your husband can sometimes spend time together without the children and thereby take care of your relationship.

You also wonder about your alcohol use and its effect on your children. Occasional nights out shouldn't have any effect on the children, if someone they know and feel safe with is taking care of them. I got the impression from your question that you do not drink at home but at restaurants etc., so your children do not need to see your drinking. Of course children sense the general atmosphere of the home and parents' arguments often make them feel insecure. A hung-over mom may also make the children worry when they see that she is unwell but do not know why.

You told that you go out to party 2 – 6 times a month, i.e. once a week on average. This does not sound very occasional. You do not tell more about your history with intoxicants or how much you drink, but judging from your memory losses you do drink enough to become intoxicated. Weekly intoxication exceeds the limits of safe alcohol use, so you really should try to cut down. The memory loss sounds particularly worrying.

Safe alcohol use can be compared to limits of large-scale consumption, which for women are 16 units of alcohol per week or 5 units of alcohol per a drinking session. If you exceed these limits regularly, the probability of alcohol-related harms increases considerably. A good way to monitor your drinking is a so-called drinking diary, where you write down the units of alcohol consumed each day. One unit of alcohol equals e.g. a bottle (0,33 litres) of medium strong beer, a glass (12 cl) of mild wine or a shot (4 cl) of spirits.

You're also wondering whether you could be an alcoholic. There are clear diagnostic criteria for alcohol addiction or alcoholism. These include, among other things, a strong craving or a compulsive need to drink, weakened ability to control when to start drinking, how much to drink or how to stop drinking, withdrawal symptoms when you stop drinking (either hangover or alleviating the symptoms with a few drinks), increasing tolerance for alcohol, drinking becoming a central issue in your life and continued use of alcohol despite the harms it is causing. Three of these criteria have to be present continuously for a month or repeatedly, if the drinking periods last less than a month. Alcoholism is, in other words, not an issue of how much you drink, but rather what your relationship to alcohol is.

Different self-assessment tests have been developed to help you assess whether your alcohol use is harmful. One of the most well known and simple is the CAGE questionnaire that consists of four questions:

1. Have you ever felt the need to cut down on your drinking?
2. Have you ever felt annoyed by people complaining about your drinking?
3. Have you ever felt guilty about your drinking?
4. Do you ever drink an eye-opener in the morning to relieve the shakes?

In Finland the limit suggesting large-scale consumption is for women 2 points or more, and each affirmative answer equals 1 point. A questionnaire consisting of only four questions is of course somewhat crude, but it does give some indication on the state of the matters. You can also try the self-assessment test here at [AddictionLink](#) to get a clearer picture of your situation.

I sensed from your question that you have been struggling with these issues alone. You said that your husband does not really understand your problem. This is quite natural: it is difficult for people to have an objective attitude towards the

drinking habits of loved ones and see the others' anxiety behind their own fear and anger. You should talk about the feelings that your drinking arouses in your husband. It would be an even better idea to seek the help of a neutral professional. The most logical option is probably to go to the nearest A-Clinic. You can find the contact information of an A-Clinic near you on the A-Clinic Ltd's web site (<https://www.a-klinikka.fi/en>) or your local phone book. A-Clinics specialise in the treatment of intoxicant and addiction problems, and you can think over your situation and the solutions together with a professional. The services of A-Clinics are confidential and free of charge.

At A-Clinics intoxicant-related problems are considered a problem that touches the whole family, and therefore the whole family is also included in the treatment. A-Clinics also offer couples and family therapy. If your children have begun to exhibit symptoms because of the situation, the local family guidance centre is the best place to help them. A-Clinics and the family guidance centre can also co-operate if needed with your permission.

By contacting this service you have shown that you want to carry the responsibility for your own behaviour and for your family. As you said, you have "a good husband and two wonderful children" who could be your source of strength in this struggle. You said that you don't think you are an alcoholic, at least not yet, and I agree on both accounts. Your alcohol use seems to be connected to the emptiness of your life. However, you can't go on like this because more serious problems will soon begin to appear. At this stage it is still relatively easy to influence things. I encourage you to take the next step and contact your local A-Clinic (or any social or health care professional, who can refer you to the appropriate place) and tell them honestly about your situation. You and your family do not need to deal with these problems alone, because help is available.

Spouse's alcohol problem ►

My husband is in the middle of one of his drinking bouts (again). He has been drinking now for two weeks. He drinks about two bottles of spirits a day. When he's drunk, he's often violent. Nothing very serious has happened yet though I am not sure if I have the courage to call the police. He has had these drinking bouts for several years now and everything seems to be getting worse.

My husband is a lonely man. Recently he resigned from his job when they tried to talk him into seeking help. I don't have the energy to keep in contact with my friends. I would be too embarrassed to invite anyone over. We have a son and a daughter who both go to school. They too seem confused and worried about dad's drinking. The situation probably affects them as well. Our son has had some problems at school, he has fits of rage and he has been teased. Our daughter is more of the meek and mild type.

I don't know what to do. I feel I have very little strength left. I've tried talking and yelling at my husband, but to no avail. He just blames me and says it's my fault he's drinking. What is my responsibility regarding my husband's drinking? I feel like I would be abandoning him if I left now. Is there something I can do to help my husband get sober? How could I help my children who live in a situation that is too much for them? I don't want to contact child welfare or social authorities because I fear they would take our children away from us. I also do not want to go to the local A-Clinic, and my husband would certainly never go, as we live in a small town.

The Answer

You bring up a very important issue. Expressing your own worries is the first step towards influencing your husband's drinking and violent behaviour. A person with an alcohol problem cannot see his own state and often denies he has a problem. Often he blames his loved ones for his behaviour and makes them feel guilty. People close to him may therefore think that they are partly responsible. However, a violent act towards another person is always wrong. You don't have to accept your husband's violent behaviour.

The person who is violent and/or suffers from alcohol problems must seek help himself. He must initiate the change himself, as no one else can change him. You can't really help anyone but yourself and your children. In this situation it is particularly important that you and your children receive help and support. It is important that you have the energy to go on. The best way to help your husband is to respect his responsibility for his own choices and to take responsibility for your life and the lives of your children. It also often happens that when the wife seeks help and support her behaviour and roles at home change. This, in turn, gradually affects the husband's behaviour.

You said that you do not want to contact your local A-Clinic and that you are afraid to contact the child welfare and social authorities. It is not always easy to seek support and begin to influence things and you may think about things for a long time before you take the first step. However, it is often difficult to change the interactional patterns within the family without the views and support of an outsider.

If you are worried about your children's welfare in the present circumstances, you can contact the person in charge of child welfare at your local social service centre. The main focus of child welfare services in Finland is the child's interest and the aim of the services is to support families. Child welfare services are confidential and are always carried out in co-operation with the family. The aim is to allow the children to grow up in their own home. Most child welfare services are non-institutional which means that a social worker works with each family individually, in co-operation with the parents and the children. Solutions are always family-specific and individual.

Depending on the family situation child welfare services may co-operate e.g. with health care workers. It is a good idea to discuss things relating to school also with the teacher or school curator. Sometimes it might be wise to contact the local family guidance centre.

Also the [A-Clinic](#) in your municipality can give you information about the various forms of support. If there is a youth centre in your town, maintained either by the municipality or the A-Clinic Foundation, you can contact them in order to get help for yourself and your children. Some youth centres also arrange meeting groups for adolescents who have lived with someone with an intoxicant problem.

The national [Kalliola Clinics](#) arrange courses for people who have lived with intoxicant abusers. The courses provide you with the knowledge that you are not alone with your problem. At the same time you can learn how others cope with these problems and possibly learn new ways of coping that you find useful.

Self-help groups for friends and family members of alcoholics, Al-Anon groups, are surely arranged also in your municipality. They are a forum for discussing matters and situations that are familiar to people who live with alcoholics. By sharing their experiences the members of the group find new ways of coping. There are also similar self-help groups for 10 - 20-year-old children. They are called Alateen groups. You can find out more about these groups on their web site: <https://www.al-anon.fi/>

If the situation (either yours or your children's) at home begins to get threatening or dangerous because of your husband's violent behaviour, I suggest that you immediately contact your local social service centre who can tell you about the shelter nearest to you. Shelters are meant for family members who suffer from domestic mental or physical abuse. They are on call 24 hours a day. You can find out more about shelters at [The Federation of Mother and Child Homes and Shelters](#) (contact points in English can be received by calling their office directly).

It is now very important for you to take care of yourself and your children. It is important for your children's welfare that you have the energy to go on. I hope that you will start working on your own welfare. Do not hesitate to give the services I've mentioned a try. It is important that you find a form of support that suits you and your children best.

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