

Special Edition

Holiday Stress

While the holiday season is meant to bring feelings of love and cheer, it's also a very stressful time for some. A study found that at least 80% of Americans are moderately to overwhelmingly stressed during this time of year.

What contributes to Holiday Stress?

- **Doing Too Much:** Too many activities, even if they are fun activities, can culminate in too much holiday stress and leave us feeling frazzled, rather than fulfilled.
- **Spending Too Much:** Finding affordable gifts can be stress in itself, and carrying holiday debt is a tradition that too many people unwittingly bring on themselves and this stress can last for months.
- **Too Much Togetherness:** The most close-knit families can overdose on togetherness, making it hard for family members to maintain a healthy balance between bonding and alone time.
- **Not Enough Togetherness:** This can be a tough time for many people, especially those who have lost partners or parents, as it reminds them of their loneliness



How to Reduce Holiday Stress:

- **Set Your Priorities:** It's important to decide what traditions offer the most positive impact and eliminate superfluous activities.
 - Examine your priorities, pick a few favorite activities and really enjoy them, while skipping the rest.
- **Take Shortcuts:** If you can't fathom the idea of skipping out on sending cards, baking, seeing people, and doing all of the stuff that usually runs you ragged, you may do better including all of these activities in your schedule, but on a smaller scale.
- **Set a Schedule:** Putting your plans on paper can show you, in black and white, how realistic they are.
 - Start with your highest priorities, so you will be able to eliminate the less important activities.
 - Be sure to schedule in some time to take a walk in nature each day if at all possible, as exercise and exposure to daylight can drastically reduce stress.
- **Breathe:** It's great if you can take ten minutes by yourself to do a breathing meditation, but merely stopping to take a few deep, cleansing breaths can reduce your level of negative stress in a matter of minutes, too.



Binge Drinking and the Holidays

What is Binge Drinking?

Binge drinking is when someone drinks enough alcohol to bring their blood-alcohol content up to the legal limit for driving.

For men that is about five alcohol drinks and for women that is about four alcohol drinks in less than 2 hours

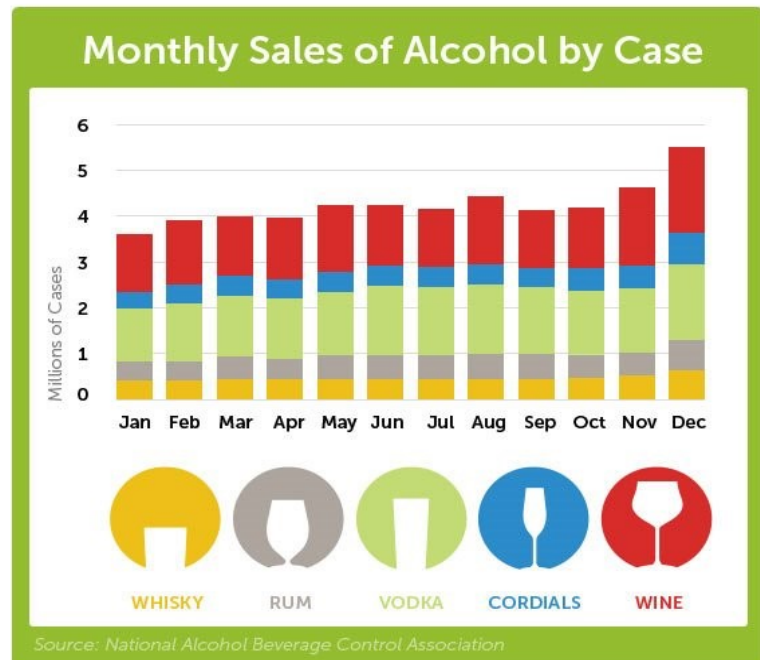
What leads to excessive drinking?

- Social pressure mixed with a brain chemistry deficiency provides a perfect storm for binge drinking
 - 22% of people who attend a holiday part have felt pressure to drink
- Alcohol-centered festivities
 - 50% of people say that alcohol plays a role in their family's holiday gatherings
- Holiday Stress
 - Having a drink at the end of a long day has become a popular way to relieve stress
 - Alcohol may not provide as big a relief as people think it does, and it can actually prolong the stress that people are feeling.

Holiday Drunk Driving

With excessive drinking comes the increased risk of people getting behind the wheel of a vehicle. During the New Year's and Christmas periods in 2018, there were 285 drunk-driving-related fatalities. These deaths were 100% preventable. Additionally, there were 10,511 people killed nationwide in drunk-driving crashes, accounting for nearly one-third of the crash fatalities that year.

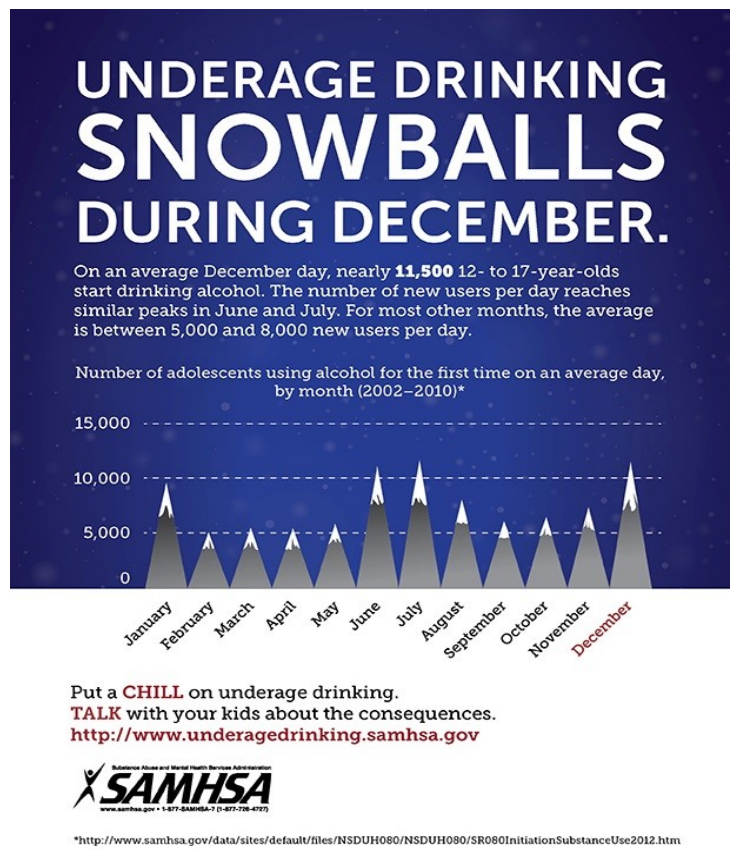
If you do choose to drink during the Holidays, be sure to have a designated driver or use Uber or a ride share service to get home safe!



Underage Drinking

For teens, the holidays are a time of fun and celebration, particularly because school is out for winter break. College underclassmen will return and may be seeing their high school friends for the first time all semester. Outside of college underclassmen, more than 11,000 teens in the United States aged 12 to 17, will use alcohol for the first time. Teen drinkers are also more likely to engage in high-risk behaviors such as binge drinking and driving under the influence.

According to a study from a sample of hospitals around the country, nearly 2,000 underage people will spend New Year's Day in the hospital because of alcohol. The same study also found that more than 1 in 10 teenagers will drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol on New Year's Eve.



How to Prevent Underage Drinking:

- **Start the conversation about underage drinking prevention:**
 - They may have more exposure to alcohol during the holiday season—set boundaries and align on your expectations
- **Be Consistent with Communication:** Strong, consistent communication with your kid is key
 - Ensure you and your spouse or partner are on the same page when communicating expectations
 - As part of regular discussion, ask them open-ended questions to help prepare them for situations where alcohol is present.
- **Don't create an opportunity for underage drinking:**
 - For adults, holiday parties may include alcohol.
 - If you're hosting an adult holiday party where alcohol is present, make sure you have other plans for your kids.
 - Should it be an event where all ages are included, remember that your kids are always watching and model responsible behavior.
- **Talk to them about Peer Pressure:**
 - Let them know that they don't need to follow what their friend are doing



How to Enjoy a Safe Holidays

- Abstain. You do not need alcohol to be the life of the party.
- Pace yourself. Avoid binge-drinking. Spread out the consumption of your drinks, consider one drink an hour.
- Avoid drinks with unknown alcohol content or mixing alcohol with energy drinks. Caffeine in energy drinks or sodas can mask the effects of alcohol, causing people to drink more alcohol than intended/are aware.
- Substitute alcoholic drinks for non-alcoholic drinks. Consider drinking water between each alcoholic beverage to slow your pace and dilute the alcohol in your bloodstream.
- Don't forget to eat food. Starch-heavy foods soak up the alcohol and will mitigate the effects of alcohol on your system.
- Secure a designated driver. Keep in mind that a designated driver stays 100 percent sober --- not the person who drank the least.
- Make Self Care a Priority. Celebrate the holiday season by taking care of your body, mind, and soul.
- Celebrate relationships. As you consider holiday occasions, think about them as a way to make new friendships and perhaps rekindle old relationships with a friend
- Create new traditions. Celebrate the fact you are reestablishing your own life. As you affirm your new self on these festive days, you are choosing to celebrate the new, better, clean and sober life that you have created.
- Service, not self. When we can focus on others, we find more joy and gratitude. So look for ways to think about and serve others. Make a special family recipe and deliver to friends. Donate your time at a homeless shelter, food pantry, or soup kitchen.

Relapse Prevention Tips

for the Holiday season

Maintaining a sober lifestyle can be especially difficult during the holidays. Here are five tips for managing the extra stress and pressure of this season.

1

Acknowledge the Risk

Accept that this season brings non-sober environments, stress, and unrealistic expectations. Give yourself grace.

2

Have a Plan

Develop a healthy strategy in advance for dealing with stressful or triggering situations.

3

Practice Saying No

...not just to alcohol and drugs, but any situation or activity that causes undue stress.

4

Use Your Support System

During the holidays, lean on your recovery support system — they know what you are going through!

5

Find the Holiday Spirit

Look beyond the trimmings of the season and remember the real purpose, and joy, of the holidays.

McFarland is a small community south of Madison in Dane County. In January of 2017, a group of concerned citizens came together to discuss substance abuse problems in the McFarland area. The McFarland RADAR is a result of these meetings



For time, day and place of meetings, please contact Cathy Kalina at CathyK@fsmad.org

We are comprised of local representatives from schools, businesses, churches, village administration as well as parents, and youth—all working together to promote healthy lifestyles

For more information go to: <https://www.radarmc.com/>

The McFarland RADAR (RADAR stands for Relevant Alcohol & Drug Awareness Resources) Coalition works to develop, implement and support environmental strategies to reduce substance abuse.

We believe by working together, we can nurture social and environmental changes to make the McFarland area a safer and healthier place, brightening the future of our children, youth and families.

McFarland RADAR Mission Statement

“The mission of McFarland’s RADAR Coalition is to promote healthy lifestyles in the McFarland area through alcohol and drug abuse prevention and education efforts.”

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

We are asking you to give the gift of time. Make a difference in the lives of our youth and our community by

1. Working with us in providing support for planning, project management and awareness campaigns
2. Helping with coalition events, conferences, workshops, and fairs held throughout the year.
3. Being a voice for change in our community, it is time to come together and be that force for change in the McFarland area.