

## “Alcohol was the first ‘drug’ I tried.

I figured because it was legal that it had to be okay. Out of all the drugs I tried, alcohol was one of the most impairing. Being drunk screws you up just as much as being high, and don't let anyone tell you different. At first it was just fun to be all hyper and silly, but then the fighting started, and after a long night of drinking, sometimes I'd black out and not remember what happened the next day. It got to be pretty bad....” — Zach



# alcohol

Alcohol is legal, sold in every province, and used for many different reasons – to socialize, relax, party, and overcome shyness being major ones. Some of the signs of problem alcohol use are:

**CRAVING** // a strong need, or compulsion, to drink.

**IMPAIRED CONTROL** // the inability to limit one's drinking on any given occasion.

**PHYSICAL DEPENDENCE** // withdrawal symptoms such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety when alcohol use is stopped after a period of heavy drinking.

**TOLERANCE** // the need for increasing amounts of alcohol in order to feel its effects.

Factors influencing alcohol dependency: family history of alcoholism, influence of friends, stress, and the ease of obtaining alcohol can all influence an individual's vulnerability to alcohol misuse. Rates of alcohol problems tend to be highest among young adults aged 18-29.

### Physical Effects:

- >> Co-ordination is impaired, leading to clumsiness, difficulty walking and slower reflexes, resulting in an increased possibility of serious accidents
- >> With continuous use, high blood pressure and damage to the heart
- >> Liver damage
- >> If drinking when pregnant, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder – resulting in physical and mental impairments to the baby
- >> When alcohol is mixed with other drugs, it can be life threatening

### Mental and Emotional Effects:

- >> Disinhibition, or the tendency to behave in which one would not normally behave
- >> Increase in aggressive and violent behaviour (i.e. fighting, crime)
- >> Depression
- >> Problems with school and learning: the more a student drinks, the lower his or her grades