

# Alcohol and Depression

*By Erick Lear*

Is drinking alcohol the best way to celebrate special occasions?

Even though many Americans believe it is common to celebrate holidays by drinking alcohol with loved ones, this type of behavior is not the best way to “have a good time”.

For many years, mental health professionals have warned that alcohol use is directly linked to depression and suicide. While drinking initially creates feelings of joy and well-being, these effects are temporary and often produce the opposite feelings instead.

Drinking alcohol affects the body in several ways. It increases impulsivity, making

someone more likely to act on suicidal thoughts or feelings. It impairs judgment, making small problems seem overwhelming. It disinhibits behavior, making someone less likely to ask for help or use coping skills that have worked in the past. Alcohol use increases feelings of hopelessness. This can make a depressed person even more depressed, or it can make a person who is not experiencing depression at all, become depressed.

Researchers have documented the link between alcohol use and depression also. A 2009 report from the Center for Disease Control found that nearly 25% of patients who died by suicide had a blood alcohol level above the legal limit for driving a car.

*What does all of this mean?*

First, it is important to un-

**Portage Path Behavioral Health's  
SUPPORT Hotline**  
Call 330-434-9144 or 1-800-273-TALK  
for 24-hour assistance.

**The Summit County Suicide  
Prevention Coalition**  
[preventsuicide@adm.org](mailto:preventsuicide@adm.org)

derstand that while drinking alcohol may be common during certain times of the year, it often makes problems worse.

If you're already having feelings of sadness, be aware that drinking alcohol will only make those feelings harder to manage and can also lead to thoughts of suicide.

If you're a family member of someone experiencing depression, be aware that special occasions when alcohol use is encouraged can be especially difficult for anyone who is

depressed. In some situations, increases in thoughts of suicide can occur.

If you or someone you care about needs help, the SUPPORT Hotline (330-434-9144) and the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-TALK) are available 24 hours a day. To find out more about the Summit County Suicide Prevention Coalition email at [preventsuicide@admboard.org](mailto:preventsuicide@admboard.org) or call (330) 762-3500.

