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April is Alcohol Awareness Month

Many of us use alcohol on a casual basis. However, for some, using alcohol is a risky proposition where they may cross the line and begin having alcohol related problems.

Alcohol impairs perception and judgment, which leads to many problems. Alcohol is a common depressant. It slows down the central nervous system, making users withdrawn and “spaced out”. Poor work and school habits, trouble with the law, family problems, and medical disorders are common among those who intentionally abuse alcohol. A person’s family life and career can be destroyed very quickly.

Unfortunately, people usually wait until they have lost everything before asking for help. Also, the consequences of alcohol are not limited to people with the problem. Families, co-workers, and employers are directly impacted.

Recognizing Substance Abuse: How can you tell if someone is having such problems? Sometimes, it is not easy. Many who have problems will not ask for help and will do everything possible to hide their problem or deny it. It is common to think a person’s unpredictable behavior is from anything but alcohol abuse. However, the following behaviors or symptoms usually are a sign for help.

- Odor of alcohol
- Slurring of speech; Incoherence
- Unsteady gait; Poor coordination
- Nausea
- Poor attention span; Poor judgment
- Falling asleep at work
- Lack of self-control
- Aggressive behavior

Ideas That Work: Helping someone with alcohol problems can be very difficult – you may even be considered the enemy. However, if you fail to act, you risk becoming an “enabler”.

Various resources can offer professional support for alcohol treatment and recovery:

- Local or national alcohol hotlines
- Local alcohol rehabilitation centers
- Anonymous groups
- Your personal physician
- Your priest, minister, or rabbi
- Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.samhsa.gov) the annual total estimated societal cost of substance abuse in the U.S. is \$510.8 billion.

MHNet’s Free Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Services can help if you or a loved one has substance abuse issues.

To access EAP Services, call 1-877-398-5816. You do not have to be enrolled in an ICUBA medical plan to access EAP services. In fact everyone in your household may access EAP services. Additional information is available on MHNet’s website – www.mhnet.com. For any pages requiring login access, please enter the following information:

Username: ICUBA Password: 8773985816.

Considerations Before Visiting a Specialist

When you see a specialist it's important to know how to interact with them to make the visit more effective and helpful. While these physicians are highly trained, they focus on a specific area of the body, and that area is their primary focus when examining and treating you. Make several considerations before visiting a specialist:

Know what you want

Before seeing a specialist, ask yourself: What is the goal? What information do you hope to gain from the visit? What type of specialist are you seeing and what is his/her expertise?

Do your homework

Whom do you want to see? Although your primary care provider may have suggested a colleague, the ultimate decision is yours. Conducting research on the skills, experience and background of healthcare providers on your team is your responsibility.

Be sure everyone is on the same page

Know beforehand how your primary care provider will communicate relevant information to the specialist and vice versa. Ensure all communication is in writing and includes a review of your medical history, current medications, the reason for the referral and all diagnostic testing results.

Time the appointment appropriately

If your primary care provider's office sets up the appointment with a specialist, make sure you're comfortable with the amount of time between the visit and a follow-up appointment with your primary care provider. To get an expedited appointment, it usually is more effective to have your provider's office call and make the request.

Have a plan in place

When you have any interaction with a health care provider, being prepared helps reduce fear and anxiety and allows you to speak more openly and listen more effectively. A written agenda, prepared ahead of time and reviewed at the beginning of the visit, helps manage the meeting. After you see the specialist, what's next? Confirm whether you'll have a follow-up visit with your primary care provider to discuss the specialist's treatment recommendations.

Remember that all ICUBA medical plans allow you direct access to in-network specialist provider services without a referral and without having to pay a deductible (co-pay or co-insurance may apply)

New Baby Enrollment Reminder.....

It is necessary to enroll a newborn, adopted child, foster child, or other child in court-ordered custody within thirty (30) days after the event or they WILL NOT BE COVERED under the ICUBA Plan.

You must obtain, complete, sign and return a new enrollment form to your HR department and make your election online to add your new dependent.