



TIME TO ASK

Education that transforms conversations about alcohol use

A Tip Sheet for Primary Care Providers

The power of talking to all patients about alcohol use and opportunities to support persons in recovery from Alcohol Use Disorder

“Excessive drinking is responsible for nearly 500 U.S. deaths every day*...As a medical community, and as a nation, we can — and must — do better to prevent the tremendous amount of disease and death that alcohol causes millions of people and the suffering it causes families...”**

Primary Care Providers (PCPs) are committed to helping their patients lead healthy lives. PCPs can have a major impact on preventing alcohol use disorders and supporting maintained recovery. The Time to Ask program teaches providers to embrace the message that it's crucial to screen for substance use disorders, including alcohol use disorders, during patient assessments and normalize discussions about alcohol use while creating safe spaces for patients to open up about their struggles. Below are some helpful tips for PCPs. An accompanying video from the perspective of an individual in recovery can also be viewed here: <https://youtu.be/Ty8ULYgho7g>

1 Recognize Your Crucial Role:

- Understand the significance of your role in identifying and addressing substance use disorders and unhealthy alcohol consumption.
- Recognize that your intervention can lead to transformational outcomes in patients' lives.

2 Empower Patients through Engagement:

- Teach the impact of alcohol on overall health.
- Encourage active participation in their treatment plan and informed decision-making process.
- Provide resources and referrals to support groups, counseling services, and rehabilitation programs.

3 Offer Attention and Compassion:

- Your attentive and compassionate approach can profoundly impact individuals struggling and/or in recovery.
- Listen actively, validate their experiences, and offer support without judgment.

4 Prioritize Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD) in Electronic Medical Records (EMRs):

- Make AUD as prominent as allergies in EMRs to emphasize its significance in patient care.
- Ensure easy access to relevant patient history and treatment plans related to AUD.

5 Initiate Conversations about Recovery Maintenance:

- Ask about recovery progress during routine visits.
- Prioritize discussions on strategies for maintaining sobriety and coping with triggers.

6 Instill Hope and Encouragement:

- Emphasize that recovery is possible with professional help, support, and dedication.
- Share success stories to inspire hope and motivate individuals to continue their journey towards recovery.

7 Collaborate for Comprehensive Care:

- Collaborate with addiction specialists, behavioral health providers, therapists, and other healthcare professionals to ensure comprehensive care for patients with AUD.
- Utilize interdisciplinary approaches to address both physical and psychological aspects of recovery.

8 Promote Continuity of Care:

- Establish a long-term relationship with patients in recovery to provide ongoing support and monitor progress.
- Schedule regular follow-up appointments to assess treatment efficacy and address any emerging challenges.

9 Remember the Power of Stories:

- Recognize that both the struggles and triumphs of individuals with AUD shape their journey towards recovery.
- Share stories of resilience and transformation to inspire hope and foster a supportive community..

Primary care providers can make a meaningful difference in the lives of individuals recovering from alcohol use disorder. Thank you for your dedication to supporting and empowering those in need.

*https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/wr/mm7308a1.htm?s_cid=mm7308a1_w

**<https://www.aamc.org/news/alcohol-related-deaths-are-spiking-so-why-don-t-we-take-alcohol-addiction-more-seriously>

