



# TEENS AND BOOZE:

## The Hard Facts

By Joan M. Smith

Third of a Four-Part Series

Alcohol — witness the Robert Louis Stevenson character who, when drinking an experimental chemical, changed from a calm, intelligent gentleman to a violent psychopath — creates its own Jekyll and Hyde personalities. It can produce a high. It can oblivate shyness, give confidence to those with a poor self-image, and produce an euphoric state where problems become so much trivia. But while doing this, alcohol also changes the mental and physical makeup of the individual.

It is during the teenage years when individuals develop a philosophy of life, decide who they are and develop their

individual identities, and it is at this crucial period in life that drinking habits have a disastrous effect. According to John E. Davis, assistant professor of alcohol and drug abuse and family medicine at the University of Maryland, alcohol prevents the adolescent from developing as he ought. It cuts off the brain and causes behavioral changes. Alcohol causes a person to become isolated and withdrawn, and creates internal mental happenings that become more powerful than external realities. Problem drinkers begin to fail grades, become aggressive and disruptive in class, and tend to skip school.

State Sen. Frank Pavadani emphasized these attitudinal changes when he reported that 70 percent of today's teenagers drink, and a good number of them are abandoning their studies and sports for a lifestyle built around excessive drinking.

Teenagers themselves are not unaware of the problems caused by their drinking peers. During the legislative seminar last month at East High School, participants discussed the infringement on student rights by those students, who through alcohol abuse, disrupt classes, "are out of it," and act strangely.

"You feel like they're going to undermine your integrity," said one student.

Added to the behavioral disruptions, there is the constant erosion of physical health by alcohol. It has been determined through research that every time a person takes a drink, he permanently damages not only his heart and liver but the brain.

Reinforcing this tragic medical dictum, Shirley Connell said, "We'll see results of earlier drinking in brain damage we're not aware of."



*'There is only one way to be safe from the dangers of alcohol — that is to quit it cold.'*



And this damage is not confined to the chronic alcoholic. Research by Dr. Melvin H. Knisely, professor of Anatomy at the Medical University of South Carolina, demonstrated that brain damage is not merely an end effect, but occurs progressively from the first cells destroyed by the first drink a person takes, and that damage accumulates relentlessly with every drink he takes thereafter. Contrary to what many believe, brain cells do not multiply and are irreplaceable.

Another tragic side of alcohol is its contribution to teenage deaths not only in fatal traffic accidents, but through suicide. It is involved in 35 percent of the suicides among adolescents, according to a 1980 Baltimore Evening Sun report.

It is tough to imagine that that bottle of beer, or that glass of wine, or that once in a while time you get drunk can lead down such a devastating trail. And it is difficult sorting out the environmental, hereditary, and psychological aspects that help create the Jekyll and Hyde phenomenon of alcohol. It is certain, however, that alcohol and its use for drinking isn't going to disappear. So it is up to the individual to learn about it and its effects and then to decide whether drinking is worth it.

Perhaps the greatest challenge about this decision came from Dr. Knisely. After seeing in the laboratory some of the effects alcohol has on the brain, he said, "There is only one way to be safe from the dangers of alcohol — that is to quit it cold."

Next Week: Picking up the Pieces.

# Chronic Alcoholics Get Help

By John Dash

Rochester, at long last, has a complete facility designed to aid the chronic alcoholic back into a healthy, functioning role in society.

For the first time, the city now has a special four-phase program for those seriously ill from alcoholism. The program is directed by the Health Association of Monroe County under a contract with the county Department of Mental Health.



CURTIN

The facility, a three-story wing rented from the Monroe County Community Hospital, encompasses a medical detoxification unit, a rehabilitation program, a community residence and an individualized aftercare program.

According to its Chicago-born director, Dr. Claude Curtin, the Health Association opened the facility about six months ago after several prior months of

clients may enter off the streets, he said, or be admitted from hospital emergency rooms. Entry to Care, or any of a number of alcohol or mental health services in the area.

The detoxification unit has 14 beds and the general stay there is seven days.

From that unit, the chronic alcoholic is admitted into a rehabilitation program, a 30-day service with a 30- to 90-day agenda of structured activities designed to educate the client about alcoholism, motivate him or her to start a personal process of change and develop attitudes and ways of doing things that are appropriate to a sober way of life.

On completion of the rehabilitation program, the client is admitted for a stay of up to a year in community residence. Clients in the residence are either waiting for placement in a long-term care facility or are working or

engaged in vocational training.

On completion of the first three phases, the client receives an individual aftercare plan. The facility offers direct aftercare help and refers clients to other sources of help as well. The progress of the client is monitored by the facility in a number of ways.

planning.

The facility treats, he said, "the more chronic alcoholic, one who is not working, alienated, who has had prior treatment." The main idea behind the program, he said, is to give the alcoholic more time to achieve sobriety — "time to get his health back."

The entry point for the program is the medical detoxification unit



The center includes a complete weight room.



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