QUICK FACTS:
Ethyl Alcohol is a legal and highly addictive drug. Alcohol dependence (addictive) producing properties are displayed by:
1. Abusive regular use of the drug.
2. Sudden attempts to stop using the drug will cause significant and painful symptoms.
3. Abuse may lead to compulsive drug seeking behavior (craving), and
4. Abuse leads to increase in the frequency or dosage of the drug (tolerance).

Alcohol’s primary addictive qualities are exerted on that region of the brain and central nervous system that is responsible for the “divided attention” mechanism and the region that produces the classical “physical / psychological dependence syndrome.” The brain’s neurochemicals associated with alcohol controls muscle relaxation and has a tranquilizer effect. These drug actions account for the abuser’s loss of control. Alcohol itself, as well as the “drug abusing” lifestyle, may suppress the body’s enzyme system by sclerosis of the liver. This suppression makes them “high risk” for infections, some life threatening. Alcoholics and intravenous drug abusers account for the highest percentage of hepatitis C virus infection. This infection has a high mortality rate.

HISTORY OF DRUG
Although American society generally accepts the use of alcoholic beverages, the misuse or abuse of alcohol is still a major drug problem and health risk. Alcohol abuse is a matter of public concern because excessive drinking cannot only affect the individual drinker; excessive use also affects family, friends, fellow workers and neighbors.

The use and misuse of alcoholic beverages has long been a controversial issue. The issue has been contested by various interest groups and legislative bodies ever since the birth of this country.

Alcohol is associated with the “good times” in life. Unlike other drugs, it is legal, it is advertised and sold on the retail market. In fact, alcohol plays a large part in the economy of many cities and states. Alcohol is used in religious ceremonies, weddings, wakes, and it is quite often given as a gift to celebrate many different occasions.

Alcohol is controlled by the government. Different states have various laws and regulations concerning the legal age when alcohol can be purchased and consumed. Some states and governments actually sell alcohol in government operated stores. There is a substantial tax on all alcohol and government’s role, interest, and control of alcohol, in part is related to this tax.

ALCOHOL - A POTENT DRUG

HISTORY - (Continued from column 1)
There is no one national attitude toward moderate or social drinking that is acceptable to everyone. Perhaps there will never be such an agreement. However, there is a developing of commonality concerning the excessive drinker, the problem drinker, and the alcoholic. This is based upon the growing recognition that alcoholism and excessive drinking represents not simply moral issues; but medical problems with complicated and interrelated chemical, physiological, psychological, and sociological aspects.

While it has become clear that most people would continue to insist on their right to drink, it has also become evident that drinking to excess and endangering the lives of themselves and others is no longer acceptable. The problem of alcoholism is now recognized as a public health problem that urgently demands intelligent, practical action based on better knowledge of its causes and potential cures.

Drinking by drivers plays a greater role as the severity of the crash increases. Up to 59 percent of fatal crashes, and 25 percent of non fatal crashes involve drinking drivers. Highway deaths have continued to rise steadily, until nearly 70,000 Americans are now killed yearly. It has been shown that alcohol

ALCOHOL ... SOCIETY’S LEGAL, OLDEST AND MOST POPULAR DRUG

OBSERVABLE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL ABUSE
After drinking, the most visible objective symptoms are:
♦ Poor coordination
♦ Thick, slow, and slurred speech
♦ Odor of substance on the breath
♦ Excessive nasal secretions
♦ Watering of the eyes
♦ Nausea and headache
♦ Possibly enlarged pupils
♦ Horizontal gaze nystagmus
♦ Vertical nystagmus (high dosage)
♦ Poor Judgment
♦ Risky Behavior

(Continued column 3 - this page)
Alcohol is metabolized, burned, and broken down in the body at a fairly constant rate. The length of time for total alcohol metabolism affects the rate at which one becomes sober again.
BEHAVIORAL EFFECTS AND BLOOD ALCOHOL LEVELS

% Blood Alcohol Signs and Symptoms

.02 Sense of warmth and well being.
.04 Most people feel relaxed, energetic, and happy. Time seems to pass quickly. Skin may flush and motor skills may be slightly impaired.
.05 More observable effects begin to occur. Individual may experience lightheadedness, giddiness, lowered inhibitions, and impaired judgment. Coordination slightly altered.
.08 Muscle coordination definitely impaired, and reaction time increased; driving ability suspect. Pulse slow.
.10 Clear deterioration of coordination and reaction time. Individual may stagger and speech may become fuzzy.
.15 Definite impairment of balance and movement.
.20 Marked depression of motor and sensory function. Slurred speech. Decidedly intoxicated.
.30 Individual is confused or stuporous.
.40 Usually unconscious. Alcohol has become deep anesthetic. Skin sweaty and clammy.
.45 Circulation and respiration functions are depressed and can stop altogether.
.50 Near death.

SYNERGISTIC EFFECTS
1 + 1 = 6, 8, 10

Combined use of alcohol and other drugs frequently has supra-additive effects. These effects can be medically hazardous and occasionally are fatal. Impaired ability during performance tasks such as driving is also dangerous, especially when the hazards are not recognized. Alcohol in combination with other drugs is the second most frequent cause of drug related medical crises. Tranquilizers are the drugs most frequently combined with alcohol and can fatally depress cardiac functioning and respiration.

ALCOHOL DEVELOPS TOLERANCE

Drinking large amounts of alcohol over long periods of time seems to change the sensitivity of the brain to the effects of alcohol. This means that larger amounts of alcohol are required to produce the same effects. This adaptation is called “tolerance.” It shows up in the use of all addictive drugs.

The dependent person shows extraordinary adaptation to alcohol. He must take relatively huge amounts to produce the changes in feelings and behavior which he previously attained with smaller quantities. Moreover, his or her capacity to drink very large quantities without losing control of actions also marks as different from the moderate or heavy drinker. Later in the chronic stage, tolerance decreases markedly until the person may become drunk on relatively small amounts of alcohol.

At present it is not known what accounts for the dramatic “behavioral tolerance” of the alcohol-dependent person. Normal drinkers and alcoholic persons do not differ much in their overall rate of alcohol metabolism. This argues that the adaptive changes must occur in the brain rather than in the liver.

Mixing Alcohol & Energy Drinks May Spell Disaster

Energy drinks are reaching their peak in popularity and continue to sell mass quantities to their youthful target audience. These drinks claim to stimulate the mind and body plus provide a boost of energy but can have adverse effects when mixed with alcohol. Lately college students and teens have been mixing these energy drinks with alcohol as a means of getting a high without getting sleepy.

Fatigue is the body’s way of saying it’s had enough to drink and it’s dangerous to continue to try to fool your body that you’re not as drunk as you really are. Even though (the energy drink) has stimulants in it, the alcohol is still going to have similar effects on you. You may feel more alert but actually the alcohol is having the same effect on you. So you might perceive that you are less impaired when in actuality you are not less impaired.

High levels of caffeine can boost heart rate and blood pressure, causing palpitations, according to National Institute of Health.

IRREVERSIBLE BRAIN DAMAGE

Heavy drinking over many years may result in serious mental disorders or permanent, irreversible damage to the brain or peripheral nervous system. Mental functions such as learning ability, memory, and judgment can deteriorate severely, and grasp on reality may disintegrate as well.

Even low doses of alcohol reduce sensitivity to taste and odors. Alcohol has little effect on the sense of touch, but dulls sensitivity to pain.

Several drinks before bedtime has been found to decrease the amount of REM (rapid eye movement) or dreaming sleep. The consequences are impaired memory and concentration, as well as anxiety, tiredness, irritability.

ALCOHOL-RELATED AUTO ACCIDENTS

Mixing these drinks with alcohol is the promise of a sustained rush that would allow people to go on drinking longer into the night and combat hangovers.

Alcohol makes people dehydrated which is one of the reasons why people have hangovers. The caffeine in energy drinks is a diuretic, which also causes dehydration. Mixing the two worsens the effects of dehydration. So it makes the effects of dehydration worse. You might feel that you can party for a long time, but in reality you are just going to have a greater hangover effect the next day.