

## **Embrace Health and Wellness by Celebrating Dry January**

In American culture, we view the start of the New Year as a time to make life changes, to reflect on the past year, to celebrate a new season in life, and a time to make changes to our behaviors, habits, and attitudes. A Dry January month of sobriety is an annual tradition for many people, an opportunity to improve your overall health and wellness.

The concept of a sobriety month at the start of the year was established in 2013 by the United Kingdom charity Alcohol Concern, which is now known as Alcohol Change UK. <u>Dry January</u> is the organization's flagship campaign which has been changing the conversation about alcohol. The trend caught on around the globe, and now many people choose to take part in Dry January as a way to simply drink less or reset after a month or two of holiday partying.

For some it's a <u>New Year's resolution</u> to drink less, while others claim it's a way to "<u>detox</u>" from excessive drinking over the holidays. All believe that it's going to be beneficial for their health and wellness. There are <u>several studies</u> that suggest the alcohol-free challenge reduces consumption of alcohol and improves health and wellness for months afterward.

Alcohol is part of many of our lives and all of us will have noticed its effects – if not the effects of our own drinking, then someone else's at one time or the other. What's true about us as individuals is equally true of our communities. We don't have to believe that our community has extraordinary alcohol problems to think it would be worth us all taking time to evaluate our drinking.

Alcohol and substance use and disorders affect the wellness, which is the overall well-being, of individuals. Wellness incorporates the mental, emotional, physical, occupational, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of a person's life. Each aspect of wellness can affect overall quality of life, so it is important to consider all aspects of health. This is especially important for people with mental health and substance use conditions because wellness directly relates to life quality and longevity.

According to the <u>National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism</u>, moderate alcohol consumption is 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men. Binge drinking is defined as a pattern of drinking alcohol that brings alcohol concentration (BAC) to 0.08 percent. This pattern corresponds to consuming 5 or more drinks (male), or 4 or more drinks (female) in about 2 hours.

SVT Health & Wellness Locations:

Homer, Alaska 99603 • 880 East End Road | 907.226.2228 | fax: 907.226.2230 | Anchor Point, Alaska 99556 • 72351 Milo Fritz Avenue | 907.226.2238 | fax: 907.226.2336 | Seldovia, Alaska 99663 • 206 Main Street | 907.435.3262 | fax: 907.234.7880

**Admin** fax: 907.226.2343 | **Medical Records** fax: 907.435.3223

"With binge drinking, the blood alcohol level increases rapidly, and with increasing blood alcohol level, the risks of impairment increase," <u>says Trang M. Vu, MD</u>, assistant professor of medicine at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. These impairments include reduced inhibitions, motor discoordination, and memory problems which can lead to car crashes, falls, risky or violent behavior, and more,

she says.

If you are binge drinking or drinking heavily, talk to your medical provider and/or local alcohol and substance use resource before abruptly quitting for a month. Frequent binge drinking or heavy drinking can build up your tolerance to the effects of alcohol, and stopping can lead to alcohol withdrawal, which can range from shakes, anxiety, irritability, insomnia, nausea and vomiting to very severe symptoms like hallucinations, delirium, coma, seizures and death. If you require assistance with your Dry January plan, the Southern Kenai Peninsula area have several resources that can help you. Check out the local <u>"Pathway to Treatment and Recovery"</u> for details.

There are numerous health and wellness benefits of a Dry January and a sober approach to the New Year. Benefits include, but are not limited to: weight loss; better sports performance; better sleep; better sex; a longer life; better mood; financial savings; more radiant skin; decreased acne; improved liver function; lower blood pressure; improve insulin resistance; reduced blood levels of a protein linked to cancer; the ability to show up for life and feel more present; not waking up feeling bloated or hungover; joints feeling better; and a mentally clearer head.

Dry January can be an excellent time to launch into the New Year, reevaluate your relationship with alcohol, make changes that improve your health and wellness, and make 2021 the best year yet! Many people feel so good after experiencing a Dry January that they evaluate why they were drinking to begin with and may decide to quit drinking beyond January. Making a change with drinking can help provide a new perspective on how your health and wellness have improved.