

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Drinkers in Need of Treatment May Believe They Have a Better Chance of Achieving Sobriety On Their Own

People who need alcohol treatment¹ often do not obtain it because they think that it is unnecessary, according to an analysis of data from the 1992 National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic study. Individuals did not seek treatment because they thought they were strong enough to handle the problem on their own (28.9%), that their drinking problem was not serious enough to warrant treatment (23.4%), and that their problems would get better by themselves (20.1%). According to the authors, “Removing these barriers to care in the future will require educating the public about the warning signs of alcohol use disorders and what symptoms should be brought to the attention of professionals, what treatment to expect, and the success of treatment once received” (p. 369).

Reasons for Not Seeking Treatment among U.S. Household Residents Who Believe They Need Treatment

(n=964)

Reason for Not Seeking Treatment	Percentage Reporting
Thought it was something you should be strong enough to handle	28.9%
Didn't think drinking problem was serious enough	23.4%
Thought the problem would get better by itself	20.1%
Wanted to keep drinking or got drunk	12.6%
Couldn't afford to pay the bill	11.3%
Were too embarrassed to discuss it with anyone	11.2%
Didn't think anyone could help	8.4%
Were afraid of what your boss, friends, family, or others would think	7.7%
Didn't have time	7.1%

¹Respondents who were classified with alcohol use disorders and who had perceived a need for, yet failed to seek, treatment at some time in their lives were asked their reasons for not seeking treatment.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Grant B.F., “Barriers to Alcoholism Treatment: Reasons for Not Seeking Treatment in a General Population Sample,” *Journal of Studies on Alcohol* 58:365-371, 1997. For more information, contact Dr. Bridget Grant at bgrant@mail.nih.gov.