



# Impact on children of Parental Alcohol Misuse

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Alcohol Action Ireland  
27<sup>th</sup> May 2009

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# Overview

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- Impact on Parent
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs
- Impact on Child
- Attachment theory
- How to Help?



# Effects of Alcohol misuse on parents

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- All social backgrounds or ethnic groups
- Physiological reactions
- Cognitive loss
- Disruption to family + home life
- Economic consequences
- Increase in domestic violence + conflict

# Maslow's Hierarchy of needs





# Effects on children

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- Neglect
- Emotional
- Educational
- Social
- Psychological

# Effects pre-natally of excessive parental drinking



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- Excessive drinking by either parent is associated with miscarriage + neonatal deaths
- Maternal prolonged heavy alcohol use can lead to a range of serious developmental problems for child- delayed neurological development, growth development, foetal alcohol spectrum



# Attachment Theory

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- Biologically based, lifelong tendency of human beings under conditions of stress to seek some form of proximity with specific persons who are perceived as protective or comforting
- 'An innate survival mechanism that provides humans with a safe haven or secure base from which to explore a potentially dangerous world'- Bowlby, 1988.



# Neglect

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- Providing physical care, food, hygiene
- GP, immunizations
- Taking on a level of responsibility beyond their years in engaging in considerable physical and emotional caregiving of parents (Kroll & Taylor, 2003)
- Inadequate supervision





# Emotional Effects

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- Family life may be characterised by chaos and unpredictability
- Headaches, Tummy pains, Panic attacks
- Children may not understand that their parents mood can be affected by alcohol may feel confused and insecure
- Difficulty regulating their emotions



# Educational Effects

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- Preoccupied or tired because of home events and unable to concentrate in school or other activities
- Repeat more grades, Attend more schools
- More likely to be truant, delinquent, drop out of school early
- Poor attendance at school
- Unable to focus on homework because of fighting, tension or worry at home
- Role reversal – developmentally inappropriate responsibility for household, siblings or parents



# Social Effects

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- Avoid bringing friends home
- May avoid going out in public with parent
- Shy away from friends may lack social skills
- Profound fear that someone will find out the truth



# Psychological Effects

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- Higher prevalence of depression, anxiety, eating disorders, suicide attempts among children whose parents misuse alcohol than their peers
- Low self esteem, tension, anxiety, depressed feelings, acting out behaviour are often reflections of insecurity due to a difficult home environment



# Childrens worries

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- Parents' health problems
- Risk of abandonment or parental death
- Finances
- Conflict between parents
- Safety



# How can you help?

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- Be aware of signs of problems at home
- If working with children talk to them directly
- If working with parents ask about their children
- Ensure appropriate action is taken making referrals on when necessary