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ALCOHOL: WHAT INFLUENCES ITS USE

The effects of alcohol depend on a number of internal and external influences.

- ◆ At the societal level, availability, accessibility, affordability and acceptability have a major influence on alcohol usage.
- ◆ The visual and print media play a major role in informing, highlighting and directing people's values and thinking processes.
- ◆ The systems of law, judiciary and welfare determine what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in every society.
- ◆ Socio-cultural attributes of peer group influences, the status symbol attached to alcohol use and the liberalized attitudes of society, all have a major impact on the entry and expanding use of alcohol in society.
- ◆ The family plays a key role in terms of social, economic and cultural values. These influences can have both a positive or negative effect by developing appropriate family norms and values.
- ◆ At the individual level, age, sex, social status, physiological attributes, nutritional levels, activity being performed, psychological status and awareness determine how much each person drinks and what effect it has on them and others.

Thus, the increasing use of alcohol is not just due to an individual's likes or dislikes but rather due to several extraneous factors operating in respective societies. This understanding and identifying of critical factors is crucial to reduce the growing impact of alcohol use.