

# AcaciaAnswers

with Dr. Emmanuel Rosa

## Am I an alcoholic?



- INTERNAL MEDICINE  
PHYSICIAN, HIV SPECIALIST
- HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL
- AT ACACIA NETWORK FOR SIX  
YEARS

Alcoholism is a disease. Often pre-determined by genetics, it should not be treated as a character flaw or weakness. In fact, the people who have a tendency toward addiction, and who beat it, are some of the strongest people around. Believe it.

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uncomfortable when alcohol is unavailable? As you can see, it's not so much about how many drinks you have each night as whether or not your alcohol consumption is causing you to be dysfunctional and isolated.

Based on what you've told me, I wouldn't consider you addicted to alcohol, though I do think two drinks a night are too much. Alcohol can be harmful to your liver and can also lead to weight gain, diabetes and other health conditions if not used in extreme moderation. Why not try and give up drinking for a couple of weeks and see what happens? If nothing else, you'll prove your friend wrong.

And if you do ever feel that you or someone you love could benefit from treatment for Alcoholism, please call me. Like Asthma or Cancer,

**Dear Doctor,**  
**I'm a little bit offended because my friend called me an alcoholic. I drink every night but usually just a couple beers, and I never get drunk. Every morning, I wake up and go to work and I've held the same job for 5 years. My friend says it's simple: an alcoholic is someone who requires more than one drink a night. In Spain, people regularly drink a bottle of wine at night! So what's the deal?**

**-Anonymous**

Dear Anonymous,  
Alcoholism is a sticky subject because, as you pointed out, plenty of people enjoy wine at dinner every night and aren't considered alcoholics. So what separates

them from the man passed out on the park bench with a brown bag dangling from his hand? Or the woman who keeps forgetting to pick up her kids after school because she's knee deep in a three martini lunch? The answer is Quality of Life.

When we screen for

alcoholism, we consider questions such as: Do you drink more when disappointed, stressed or in a quarrel with someone? Is drinking making your home life unhappy and harming your relationships? Do you ever experience black outs due to drinking? Do you feel

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