

Addiction: It's a Family Affair

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A study published in the January 2000 issue of the *American Journal of Public Health* found that **one in four children in the U.S. is exposed to family alcohol abuse or alcoholism before age 18**. Prior research shows that children of alcoholics are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than children who grew up in non-affected homes. It is important to consider how alcohol problems affect the family system and are perpetuated in future generations.



On the biological level, new techniques for studying brain chemistry are suggesting that there are genetic differences in natural opioid activity in the brain. In one study, children of alcoholics had less natural "feel good" chemical activity but had a higher number of opiate receptors, meaning that they started out feeling lower but then got a bigger charge out of a small drink. On the psychological level, children from alcohol-affected families often grow up in chaotic, emotionally volatile households and do not have healthy role-modeling for communication and problem-solving. If they see a parent drinking to relieve or escape from emotional pain, they are learning to do the same. And from a social standpoint, if Junior sees that Dad is seemingly incapable of enjoying yard work, fishing, or golf without a six-pack at hand, he will likely grow up to echo a client who said, "I never knew that *not* to drink was an option."



**If you say "no", you won't be alone...
and your children will say "thanks."**

Choices can be made; the cycle can be stopped.

REAP is here to help families change in healthy ways.

Believe it or not, 35% of the people in our country do not drink at all.