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**NEWS RELEASE**  
**HIV/AIDS and Alcohol**

When you are HIV positive, you have to work hard to stay healthy. Drinking less alcohol or not drinking at all can help you fight HIV disease and improve your overall health.

Alcohol can reduce your adherence to medication and impair your judgment so that you don't protect yourself sexually. Alcohol may also depress your immune system and impair HIV treatment. Drinking alcohol can be especially dangerous if you have hepatitis C or any other liver damage.

Alcohol has many negative effects on the body. It weakens your immune system and it can increase the risk of side effects from medicine. Excessive alcohol use can cause damage to the liver and pancreas, stomach ulcers and other digestive problems, and trouble sleeping.

One of the worst effects that drinking can have if you are HIV positive is to upset your schedule for taking HIV medicines. Taking several different medicines can be complicated. When taking medications you must take them on time, take the right dosage, and know whether or not to take them with food. Drinking alcohol can make you forget to take your medicine or skip doses or take the wrong dose.

Alcohol impairs your ability to think clearly and make good decisions. Alcohol use is often associated with high-risk sexual behaviors. When you have HIV, you need to take extra steps to avoid spreading the virus to others.

Alcohol can affect your judgment. You may forget to use a condom. You may not realize the risk involved in the situation. You may put someone else at risk of contracting HIV.

For many people, drinking is a response to life's problems and pressures. If you use alcohol to deal with depression or the stress of living with HIV, you should talk with your doctor or healthcare provider about healthy ways to respond to pressures.

If you feel you need to drink less or quit drinking, talk with your doctor, healthcare provider or someone you trust. They can give you the support and encouragement you need, offer you advice and recommend services to help you.

For more information about HIV and AIDS, call the Otsego County Health Department at 607-547-4230 or visit the New York State Department of Health web site at [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov).

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