

How Alcohol Misuse Fans the Pandemic and the Pandemic Exacerbates Alcohol Misuse



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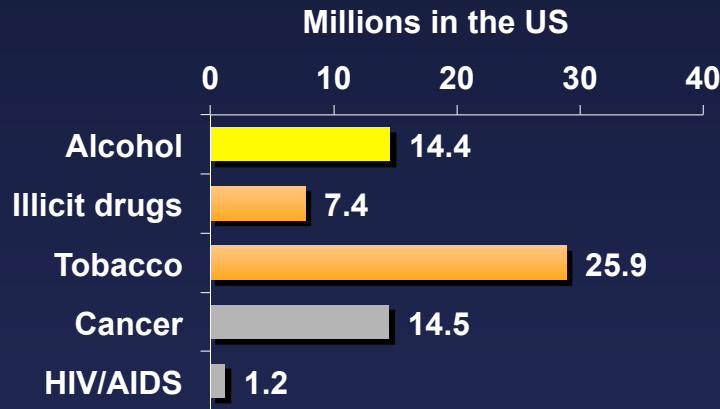


Friends of NIAAA Webinar
September 15, 2020

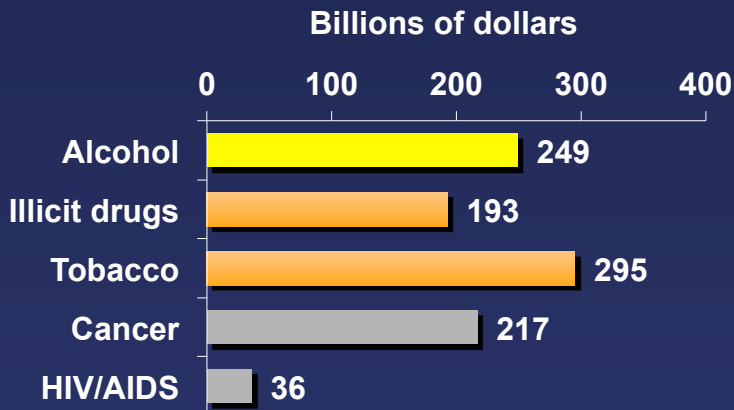


Cost and Scope of Alcohol-Related Problems in U.S.

Prevalence of disorder/disease



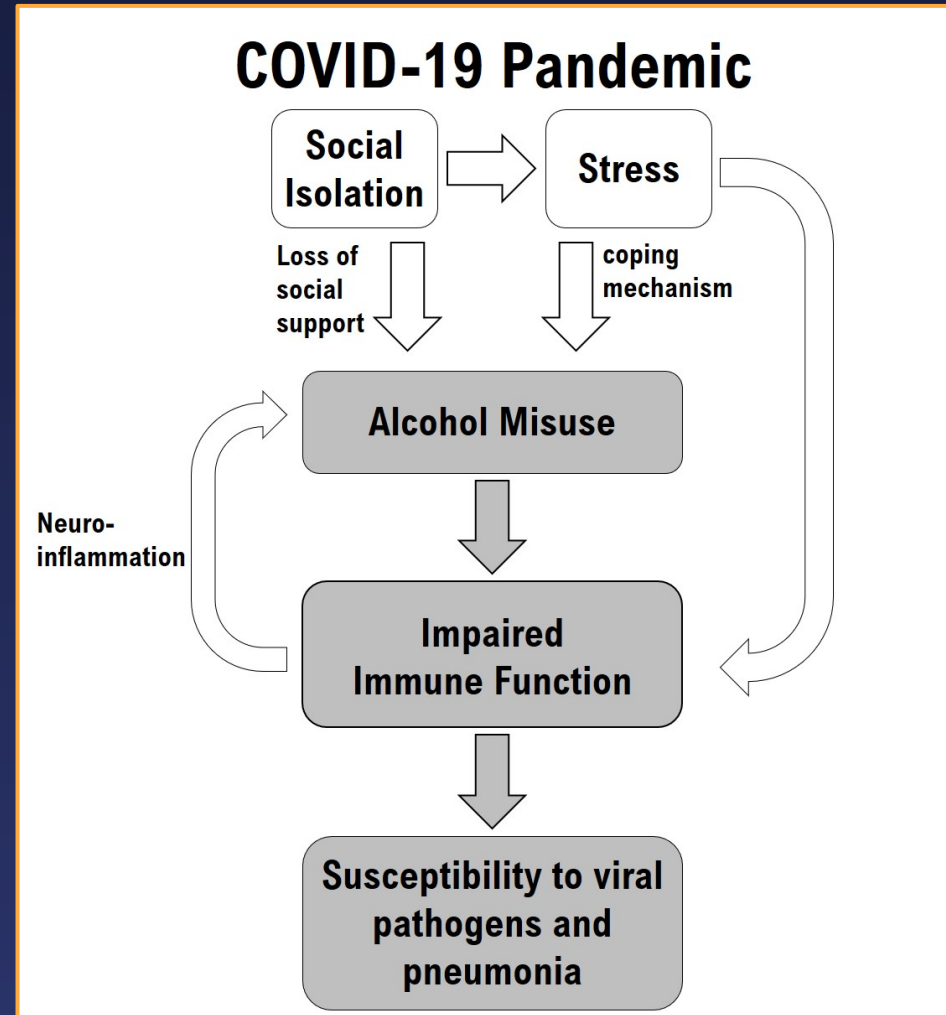
Cost to society



- >200 diseases and health conditions associated with alcohol misuse (alcohol use disorder (AUD), liver disease, cancer, etc.)
- In 2018, 5.8% (14.4 million) of people 18+ reached criteria for AUD
- ~ 88,000 people die annually from alcohol-related causes
- ~ 50% of all liver disease deaths attributable to alcohol misuse
- Increase in the intensity of binge drinking, emergency department visits and hospitalizations in last 10 years
- **<10% of people with AUD get any treatment and fewer than 4% receive pharmacotherapy**

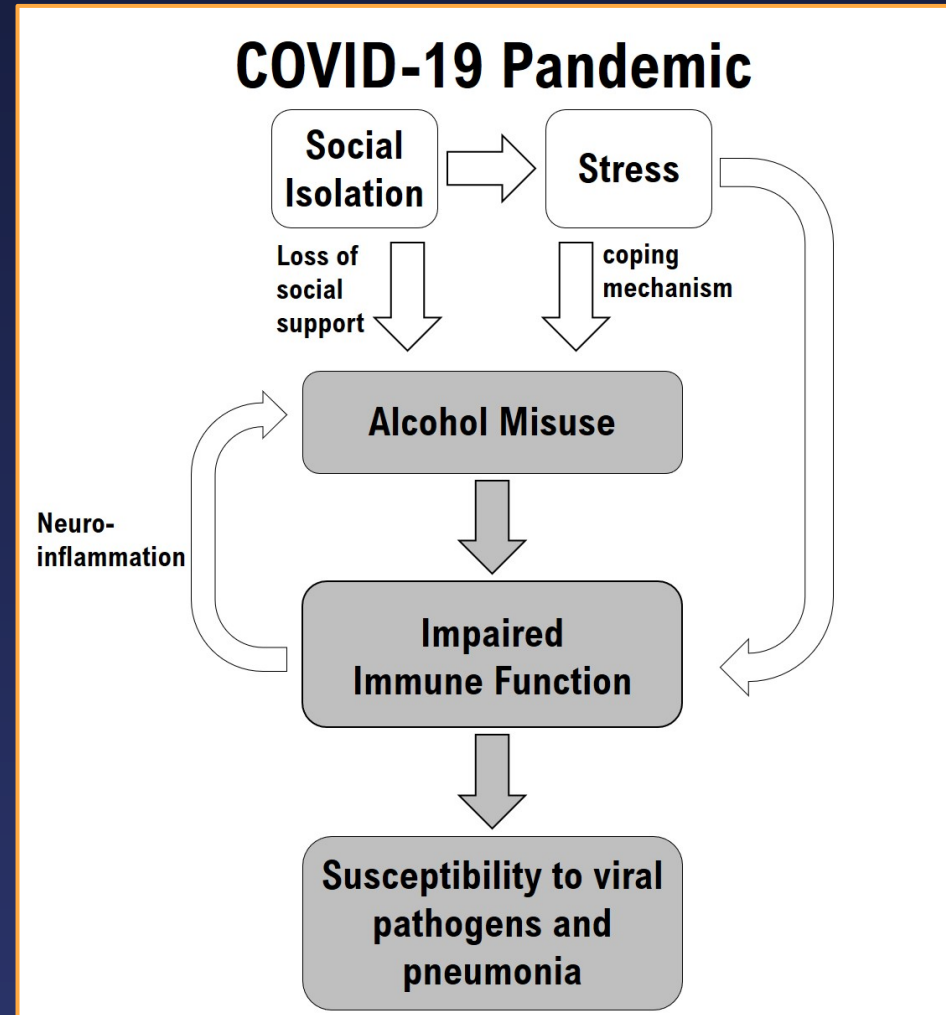
Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Alcohol Use and Treatment

- Physical distancing can lead to **social isolation** or loss of social support, which can lead to stress. **Stress and uncertainty** associated with the pandemic may prompt more people to drink alcohol to cope. For those in recovery, stress related to the pandemic could precipitate relapse.
- Physical distancing poses **challenges for treatment and recovery**. Face-to-face therapy and in-person mutual support group meetings may not be possible, but telehealth and virtual meetings can be helpful options for individuals seeking treatment or in recovery from AUD.



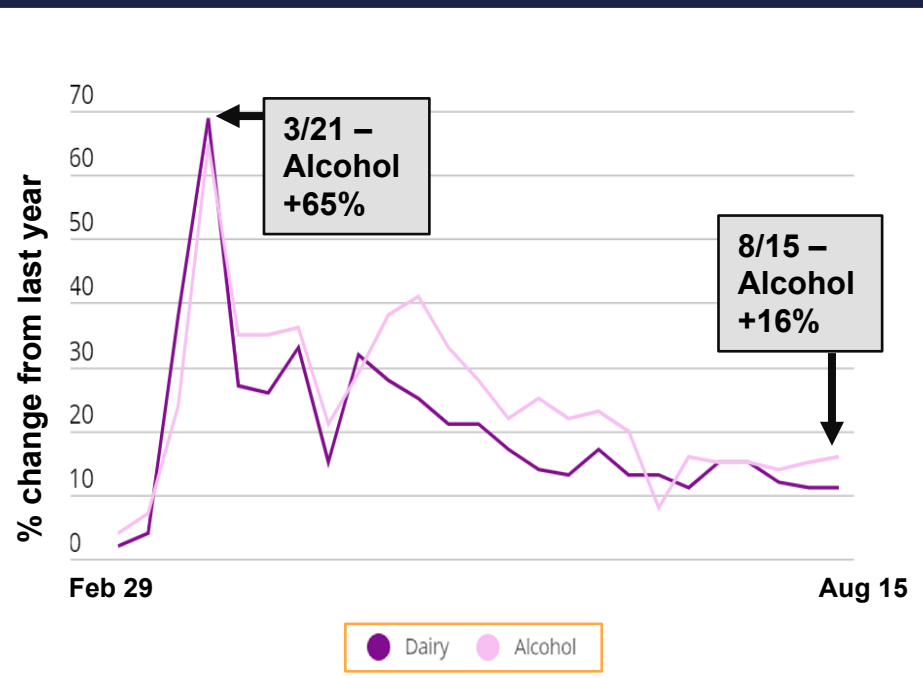
Impact of Alcohol Use on COVID-19 Pandemic

- The **biological effects** of alcohol could also exacerbate the pandemic. Alcohol compromises immune function, increasing the risk and severity of lung infections. Chronic alcohol consumption increases the risk for acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), with increased need for mechanical ventilation, prolonged intensive care unit stay, and higher incidence of mortality.
- Alcohol is also known to produce **behavioral disinhibition** and can promote risky behavior with both friends and strangers.



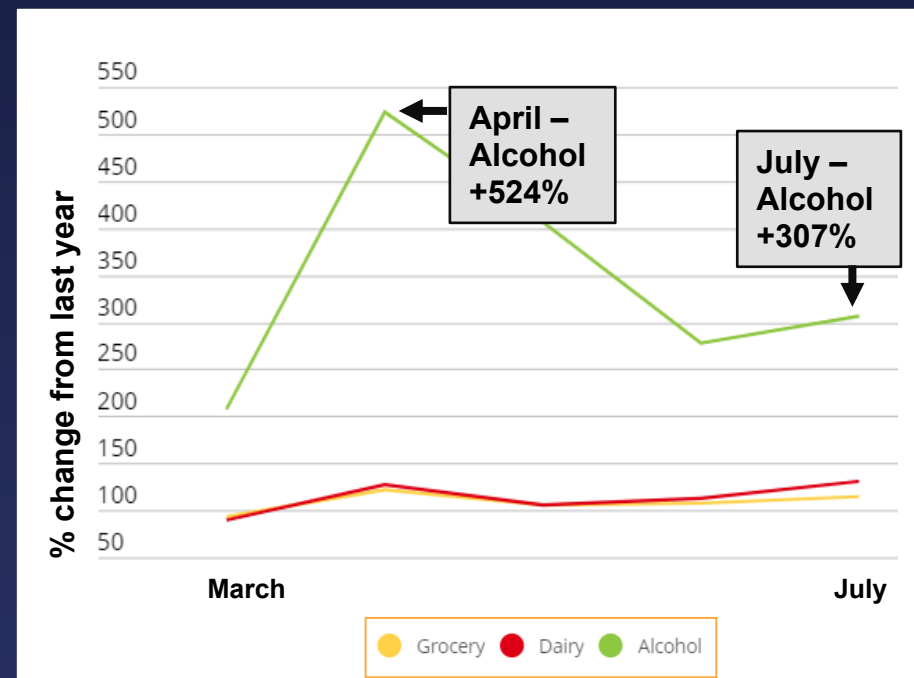
Alcohol consumption during the pandemic: Alcohol Sales Relative to 2019

Brick and Mortar (Off-premise)



Online

Represents approximately 3% of total sales pre-pandemic

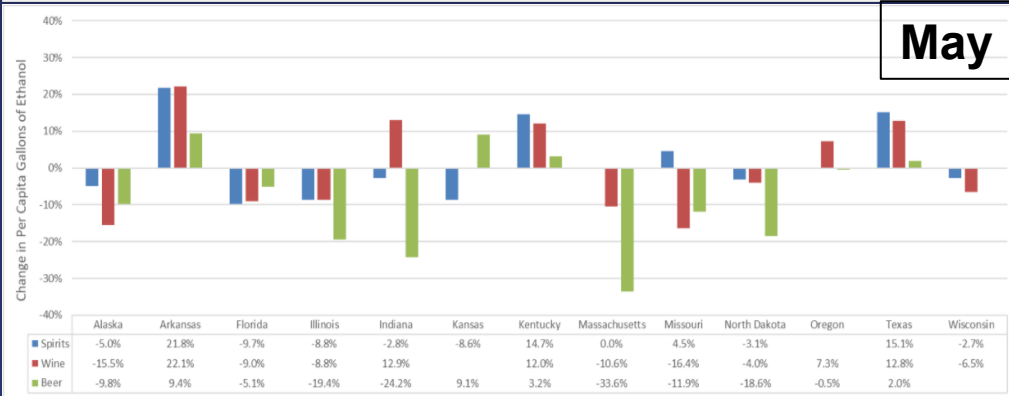
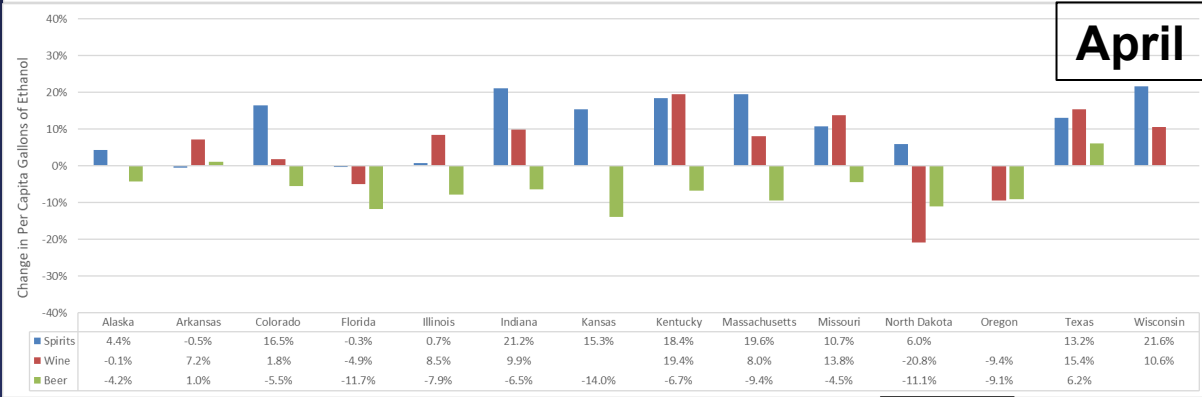
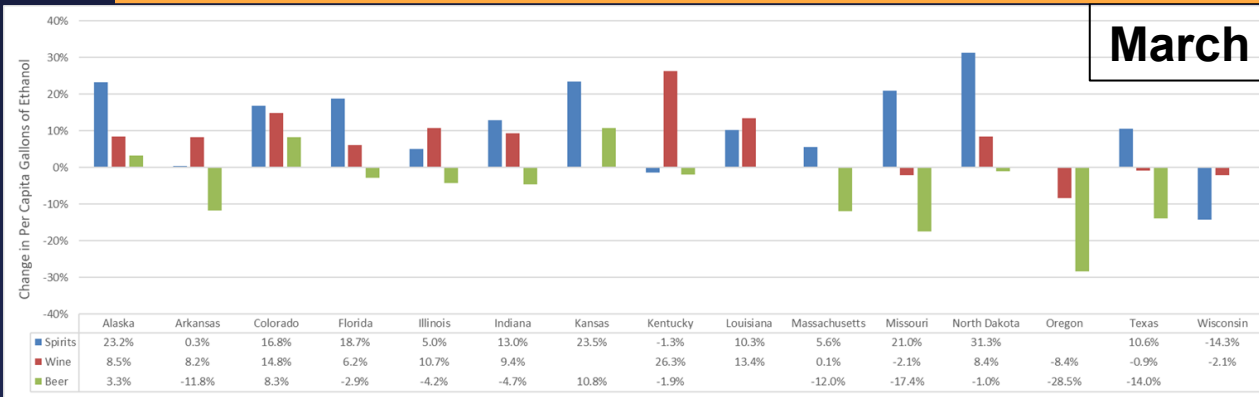


Source: [The Nielsen Company \(US\), LLC](#)

Off premise: Retail outlets that can legally sell alcohol for personal consumption

On premise: Establishments licensed for the sale and consumption of alcohol on the premises of the location

Changes in On-premise and Off-premise Per Capita Sales of Spirits, Wine, and Beer in March-May 2020 Versus Prior 3-year Averages for March-May



Data from states with information available as of 7/24/20 show that sales increased about 5% overall in March and April, while sales in May decreased about 5% overall, relative to the averages for 2017, 2018, and 2019.



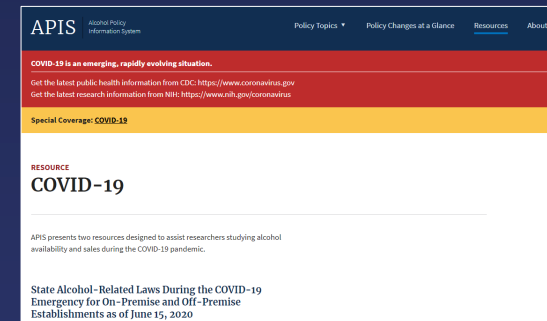
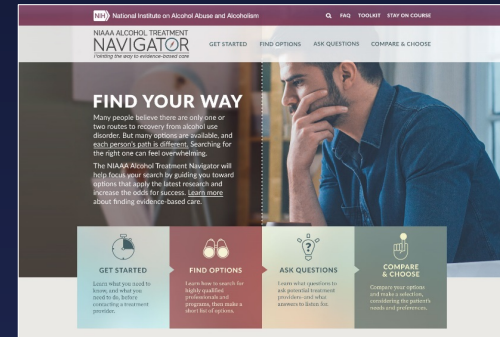
Source: [NIAAA Alcohol Epidemiologic Data System](#)

Drinking to Cope

- Surveys of consumers in the US and elsewhere suggest that some people are drinking more while others are drinking less
- For those who may be consuming more alcohol, limited data suggest that stress is a contributing factor. For instance:
 - Alcohol use increased among college students in March particularly among those reporting higher levels of stress and anxiety ([Lechner et. al. 2020](#))
 - People who said their psychological well-being was impacted negatively by the pandemic also reported more drinking days and more drinks per occasion ([Rodriguez et. al. 2020](#))
 - An Australian survey found that 20% of people reported drinking more during the pandemic and about half endorsed stress, anxiety, boredom, or worry about COVID-19 as reasons for drinking more ([Biddle et. al. 2020](#))
- Such findings are concerning given that drinking to cope places a person on a slippery slope to AUD
- In addition, increases in consumption can increase the risk of injuries at a time when many hospitals are inundated with sick patients

NIAAA Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- Updating the [NIAAA Alcohol Treatment Navigator[®]](#), an online resource for understanding and searching for professionally-led treatment, with information for **finding telehealth services and online programs during the pandemic**
- Continuing to provide [Rethinking Drinking](#), an interactive website to help individuals **assess their drinking habits**, understand how much alcohol they are consuming, and explore ways to make a change
- Updating the [Alcohol Policy Information System](#), a database of alcohol policies at the state and federal levels, with information about **state alcohol-related COVID-19 policies**
- Providing data on **apparent per capita alcohol consumption** during the pandemic through the [NIAAA Alcohol Epidemiologic Data System](#)



NIAAA Response to COVID-19 Pandemic

- Information for the general public (e.g., [fact sheets and Director's blog](#) on alcohol and the COVID-19 pandemic)
- Funding opportunity for extramural researchers on alcohol and COVID-19
- Intramural study on the impact of the pandemic over time on alcohol use and consequences in individuals across the spectrum of alcohol use and among those with AUD
- Participation in trans-NIH COVID-19 activities and funding opportunities such as:
 - **NIH Rapid Acceleration of Diagnostics (RADx) Programs** focused on underserved populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19 (**RADx-UP**) and novel approaches for COVID-19 testing and surveillance (**RADx-Rad**)
 - Efforts focused on social, behavioral, and economic health impacts of COVID-19; pregnant and lactating women and children; speeding the development of therapeutic interventions; screening, diagnosis, and monitoring of COVID-19; digital healthcare; and community interventions

NIAAA

Your source for credible, evidence-based information about alcohol and health

www.niaaa.nih.gov

Special thanks to Rachel Anderson, Kat Tepas, Aaron White, and Bridget Williams-Simmons



Home » Alcohol and COVID-19

Alcohol and COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic is affecting every family across the country and will likely have a long-lasting impact on public health and well-being. Alcohol misuse is already a public health concern in the United States, and alcohol has the potential to further complicate the COVID-19 pandemic in multiple ways. Below are links to important resources for the public, clinicians, and researchers from NIAAA.

[ALCOHOL TREATMENT WHILE PHYSICAL DISTANCING \(ALSO AVAILABLE AS A PDF\)](#)
If you or a loved one need alcohol treatment while practicing physical distancing, learn about the professionally led treatment and mutual-support group options available virtually.

[NIAAA ALCOHOL TREATMENT NAVIGATOR TELEHEALTH AND MUTUAL SUPPORT OPTIONS](#)
The NIAAA Treatment Navigator FAQs on searching for alcohol treatment providers now includes information about telehealth and online options during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[NIAAA DIRECTOR'S BLOG ON ALCOHOL AND COVID-19](#)
NIAAA Director, Dr. George Koob, discusses what we know about how alcohol affects our immune and stress systems, along with issues related to treatment access during the pandemic.

[DRINKING ALCOHOL DOES NOT PREVENT OR TREAT CORONAVIRUS INFECTION AND MAY IMPAIR IMMUNE FUNCTION](#)
While hand sanitizers containing 60-95% ethyl alcohol can help destroy the coronavirus on surfaces, drinking alcohol offers no protection from the virus. In fact alcohol misuse may impair immune function.

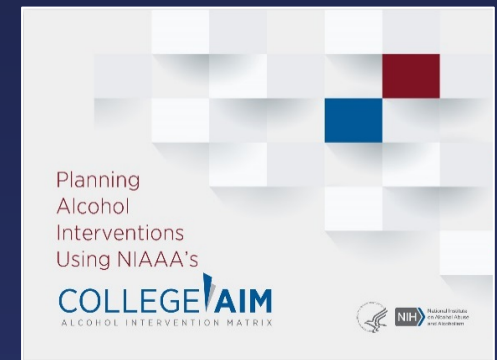

[FOR CLINICIANS: HELPING PATIENTS ACCESS TREATMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC](#)
If you are a healthcare provider, learn how to help patients or clients who need help with an alcohol problem during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[FOR RESEARCHERS: COVID-19 FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES](#)
NIAAA has issued an alcohol-specific COVID-19 NOSI for administrative and competitive supplements (NOT-AAA-20-11), and is participating in other new NIH NOSIs. [See the NOSIs and find out who to contact for more information.](#)

[FOR RESEARCHERS: NIAAA COVID F32, K99 extensions](#)
This webpage provides guidance about no-cost extensions, with or without funds, to NIH Pathway to Independence Awards (K09R00) and Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Fellowships.

[STATE-BY-STATE ALCOHOL-RELATED COVID-19 POLICIES \(PDF 1.6MB\)](#)
This review looks at alcohol-related policies during the COVID-19 pandemic across all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

[ALCOHOL SALES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC](#)
Here we present such data as are available on per capita alcohol sales during the COVID-19 pandemic.



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