

# The Truth Behind Alcoholism and Women

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Where Women Heal

to other violent crimes. In addition, several studies have found that women become addicted to alcohol more easily than men – creating a “fast track” to addiction that is extremely hard to counteract.

Complicating matters further, studies have found that women are more likely than men to engage in secretive alcohol abuse. This makes the condition hard to identify and treat effectively. The reasons why women engage in secretive alcohol abuse include the social stigma attached to drinking (specific to the gender), a fear of losing control over one’s life, as well as concerns about losing one’s family if the problem were to be discovered.

What makes hidden alcoholism such an insidious problem is that a woman who works hard to conceal her drinking becomes exceptionally skilled at hiding the problem from everyone – even her husband, family and friends. Thankfully, after years of silence and neglect, the issue of hidden alcoholism in women is finally beginning to receive the national attention it deserves.

Palm Springs, FL ([RPRN](#))

03/24/10 — In the United States, over 5 million women abuse alcohol in a manner that threatens their health or personal safety. On top of all the potential health hazards, alcohol abuse is a high-risk behavior for women as it increases the chance of becoming sexually assaulted or falling victim

## **How do Women Hide Their Alcoholism?**

There are a number of ways in which women tend to mask their alcohol addiction. As their addiction deepens, they actually become quite skillful at these techniques, leaving many loved ones blindsided when the issue inevitably comes to light.

For the busy, multi-tasking woman, hiding alcohol consumption comes down to a matter of timing. They prepare meals for the family and get their husbands and kids ready for work and school respectively. Then, once everyone is out the door, and they are alone, they are free to start drinking. For women who see their lives as unfulfilling, or feel trapped in their traditional gender roles, this is a chance to escape reality – and pursue a more independent path – albeit a highly destructive one.

Some women are unable to schedule their drinking with such tight control. For them, it becomes a never-ending effort to mask the smell of alcohol on their person. These individuals will engage in a number of “stealth” techniques to hide the activity, including chewing gum, using breath mints or wearing heavy perfume to mask the smell.

Finally, there is the hiding. Recently, the husband of a recovering alcoholic returned home from his wife’s alcohol rehab program and began searching through the house. Although everything appeared normal on the surface, he soon discovered that his wife had been hiding beer, wine and hard alcohol in a number of locations that included, in the ceiling tiles, beneath the house itself, and even between the mattresses of the bed they shared together.

## **The Shame Spiral**

The deeper a woman falls into the cycle of alcoholism, the more shame she feels over her lack of control. This creates a vicious cycle in terms of addiction. The more ashamed an individual becomes, the less likely she will be to reach out for help. This places a great deal of burden on loved ones, who must now be called upon to identify the alcoholic behavior and help get that individual into an alcohol rehab program.

## **Looking for the Signs of Hidden Alcoholism**

Because women who are suffering from hidden alcoholism are highly unlikely to admit that they have a problem (or seek professional help on their own accord) it is absolutely imperative that friends and family members become familiar with the signs and symptoms of this insidious disease.

Be aware of these classic symptoms of alcoholism in women:

- Suddenly poor performance at work or school
- Drinking at socially unacceptable times throughout the day
- Disappearing without warning for stretches of time
- Chronic illness (hangovers)
- Strong alcohol cravings
- Irritability and moodiness

Addiction treatment professionals look for one or more of the conditions above being exhibited for a period of six months or longer before making the determination that alcohol (or drug) abuse is the primary cause.

Once loved ones have confirmed that there is a legitimate alcohol abuse or addiction problem, the next step is to call for an intervention. An alcohol intervention is a chance for concerned friends, family or co-workers to come together and confront the individual about her drinking, and illustrate how it is impact the lives of those around her. The end game of any alcohol intervention is to get the individual to admit that she has a problem, and then take her to an addiction treatment center immediately following the meeting.

## **Counseling and Hidden Alcoholism**

Once a woman is lucky enough to enter into a professional alcohol rehabilitation program, she will need to take part in the various counseling programs offered at the facility. Hidden alcoholism counseling helps treat the condition at the core by addressing the “triggers” that have led to the unwanted behavior. Women are given more positive ways to respond to

these stressors – and learn the decision-making skills required to achieve and maintain sobriety.

This can be a difficult time, as most women have never spoken openly and honestly about their condition with another individual. However, simply knowing that someone *cares* and *understands* their pain can lead to amazing breakthroughs. Although detox and aftercare are important elements of alcohol treatment, it is counseling and therapy that represent the “heart and soul” of the program.

### **Gender-Specific Alcohol Addiction Treatment**

After years of neglect from the research community, a number of studies in recent years focused on finding the most effective way to treat women who drink compulsively. What these studies found is that women respond more positively to gender-specific alcohol addiction treatment – especially when it takes place exclusively in the presence of other women. Women in these gender specific programs felt safer, thereby making them more comfortable and open to treatment. They also formed support structures with other women in the treatment center – which in turn greatly enhanced the recovery process.

### **Hope and Salvation – Grounded in Reality**

Completing treatment for hidden alcoholism provides a new lease on life, but also comes with a number of challenges. Women in recovery must rebuild the relationships with her family and friends that have been severely damaged as a result of their drinking. To keep the positive momentum gained during treatment going, she must maintain a presence at aftercare programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous or follow-up counseling at the original facility. This is how she lives her life in a more open manner – and replaces old destructive behaviors with new, healthier endeavors.

[www.orchidrecoverycenter.com](http://www.orchidrecoverycenter.com)

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## About The Orchid Recovery Center

The Orchid is a drug and [alcohol rehab](#) facility located in South Florida that is specifically geared to the needs of women afflicted with addiction and unresolved trauma. The Orchid was founded to meet the needs of women that were not being addressed by the recovery community. The Orchid holds the belief that substance abuse in women has a cause, a progress and a societal perception different than that of men. Specifically women addicts are more likely to have poor self concepts of guilt and blame, and mental health problems than male addicts. Furthermore, they are more likely than men to let social stigma, labeling and guilt prevent them from seeking help.

<http://www.orchidrecoverycenter.com/>

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