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APA Offers Tips for Holiday Alcohol Consumption

Arlington, Va. – As the holiday season approaches, with its many social activities, the American Psychiatric Association's (APA) Council on Addiction recommends safe and moderate consumption of holiday libations.

APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition Text Revision (DSM-IV-TR)*, states that as many as 90 percent of adults in the U.S. have had experience with alcoholic beverages, and 60 percent of males and 30 percent of females have had one or more alcohol-related adverse life event. The following tips are recommendations for a safe holiday season:

1. **Do not drink and drive, use heavy machinery, or combine alcohol with other medications.** Alcohol impairs the ability to react, causes drowsiness, and affects judgment. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reports that about three in 10 Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related car accident at some time in their lives. NHTSA estimates that alcohol was involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes and accounted for the deaths of 16,694 people in 2004.
2. **People with a family history of alcoholism, or a prior history of alcohol abuse, are at increased risk of alcoholism.** People in recovery from an alcohol-related disorder should not drink. More than one-half of American adults have direct family experience with alcohol problems, which cost Americans more than 100,000 lives and approximately \$185 billion each year. For individuals in recovery from alcohol abuse or dependence, small amounts of alcohol typically lead to relapse. People who are younger than the legal drinking age should not consume alcohol.
3. **Pregnant women or women trying to get pregnant** should not drink at all. Alcohol consumption interferes with growth and development of the fetus, causing reduced birth weight, birth defects, learning and behavior disorders, and newborn distress.

For most adults, moderate alcohol use - up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older people - generally does not result in health problems. However, alcoholism, or alcohol addiction, is a progressive disorder and, in 2004, more than 15 million Americans ages 12 or older were classified as being dependant on or had abused alcohol (*2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*).

Alcoholism may include the following symptoms – craving: a strong need or urge to drink; loss of control: not being able to stop once drinking has begun; physical dependence: withdrawal symptoms such as nausea, sweating, shakiness; and tolerance: the need to drink greater amounts to get “high” or experience and altered state of mind.

If you or a loved-one is struggling with an alcohol-related addiction, consult with a medical doctor about possible treatment options or log onto www.healthyminds.org for more information and to find a psychiatric physician in your area.

About the American Psychiatric Association:

The American Psychiatric Association is a national medical specialty society whose more than 36,000 physician members specialize in the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of mental illnesses including substance use disorders. Visit the APA at www.psych.org and www.healthyminds.org.