

CRAIN'S
Health Pulse

Alcohol misuse down but still a concern on Long Island: report

Though alcohol misuse by Long Island adults has declined in recent years, it's still a significant concern for health care providers and residents as well as an indicator of the area's overall health, according to an analysis by the Long Island Health Collaborative.

The analysis found that from 2011 to 2017, the percentage of adults who reported having at least one drink in the past month was slightly higher in Nassau and Suffolk counties than nationally and statewide. At the same time, the percentage of Long Island adults who reported having at least one drink in the past month dropped 9.2% during the same period—from 67.7% in 2011 to 58.5% in 2017.

Additionally, in 2017 the self-reported incidence of binge drinking by adults in Nassau and Suffolk counties in the past 30 days dropped to 17.4%, representing a six-year low, the analysis found.

"The downward trend in binge drinking is a positive sign, although alcohol misuse continues to concern health care providers as well as many Long Islanders themselves," the collaborative stated. Alcohol misuse can lead to cardiovascular disease and cancer as well as mental health disorders.

The collaborative noted that its recent Community Health Assessment Survey revealed that alcohol and drug abuse ranked first in Suffolk County and second in Nassau County as the biggest ongoing health concern. Greater availability of substance-abuse treatment programs can help to reduce alcohol misuse, it said.

The collaborative is a partnership that includes Long Island hospitals, county health departments and community-based organizations, among other entities. It's part of the Long Island Population Health Improvement Program, an initiative funded by the state Department of Health.