NIAAA Advises “How to Cut Down on Your Drinking”

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), there are important reasons to cut down on your consumption of alcohol. How do you know if you are drinking too much? NIAAA recommends asking the following questions:

- Do I drink alone when I feel angry or sad?
- Does my drinking ever make me late for work?
- Does my drinking worry my family?
- Do I ever drink after telling myself that I won’t?
- Do I ever forget what I did while I was drinking?
- Do I get headaches or have a hangover after I have been drinking?

If the answer is “Yes” to any of these questions, you may have a drinking problem. NIAAA recommends the following steps to help you cut down on your drinking:

- Write your reasons for cutting down or stopping. There are many reasons why you may want to cut down or stop drinking. These may include improving your health, sleeping better, or having a better relationship with your family. Make a list of reasons you want to drink less.

- Set a drinking goal. Choose a limit for how much you will drink. You may choose to cut down or not to drink at all. NIAAA recommends that if you are cutting down, keep below these limits: for women, no more than one drink a day and for men, no more than two drinks a day.
❑ **Keep a “diary” of your drinking.** To help you reach your goal, NIAAA recommends keeping a “diary” of your drinking. For example, write down every time you have a drink for 1 week. Try to keep your diary for 3 or 4 weeks. This will show you how much you drink and when. NIAAA provides an example of a drinking diary on their website at [http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/handout](http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/handout)

❑ **Watch it at home.** Keep a small amount or no alcohol at home. Don’t keep temptations around.

❑ **Drink slowly.** When you drink, sip your drink slowly. Take a break of 1 hour between drinks. Drink soda, water or juice after a drink with alcohol. Do not drink on an empty stomach. Eat food when you are drinking.

❑ **Take a break from alcohol.** Pick a day or two each week when you will not drink at all. Then, try to stop drinking for 1 week. Think about how you feel physically and emotionally on these days.

❑ **Learn how to say “No.”** You do not have to drink when other people drink. You do not have to take a drink that is given to you. Practice ways to say no politely.

❑ **Stay active.** Use the time and money spent on drinking to do something fun with your family and friends.

❑ **Get support.** Ask your family and friends for support to help you reach your goal. Talk to your doctor if you are having trouble cutting down.

For more information regarding cutting down on your drinking, please visit NIAAA’s website at [http://niaaa.nih.gov](http://niaaa.nih.gov). For further information regarding this article or other substance abuse issues, please contact Karen Kuehn Howell, Ph.D., at the Maternal Substance Abuse and