

When Is Too Much Drinking, Too Much ... Especially After TBI?

Source: Ask The Expert – Produced by Victoria Tilney McDonough and Brian King

Video Link: <http://www.brainline.org/content/multimedia.php?id=2895>

Question

My brother recently returned from his third deployment overseas with a traumatic brain injury. Before and in between deployments he drank quite a bit at times. Now that he's back he's been drinking again. Is some alcohol okay or when is too much, too much?

Answer

Dr. John Corrigan: So, your brother has returned from his third deployment, it sounds like, and had a brain injury in the most recent one, and before and in between deployments drank quite a bit or at times, which is not uncommon among our military service men and women. And now, since his brain injury, he's back home and seems to be doing some binge drinking and your question is how concerned should we be about that binge drinking, should be a matter of not drinking too much, but some is okay.

And like so many, it sounds like your brother is dealing with the multiple issues that come from deployment in our most recent conflict and some of the various problems, not just brain injury, that occur from that. So I guess I think it's important to be concerned about the drinking. We are pretty sure that the recovery from a traumatic brain injury is affected by adding alcohol or illicit drugs into the picture. And we are sure that binge drinking is too much, how much drinking is too much is something there's a little bit of difference of opinion in the field. My own advice to the folks I work with, both the veterans and not veterans, is that the only amount I can tell you for sure that's safe is none.

So if the drinking is, you know, being needed now for dealing with some of the post deployment gook that we deal with, let's try to maybe together figure out another way to address some of that and let's try to check the drinking now, particularly given that you have recently had a traumatic brain injury. That would be my approach.