

Alcohol: The Whole Truth

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Alcohol Weakens Cognitive Abilities

- Inhibits the ability to access information stored in long-term memory.
- Reduces attention span up to 48 hours following consumption.
- Negatively impacts areas of the brain that control memory, coordination, and judgment for up to 72 hours following consumption of even small amounts.
- Inhibits REM sleep and the ability to get adequate amounts of sleep.
- Long-term heavy drinking (i.e. more than one year) can result in the death of brain cells and damage to connections between nerve cells.

Alcohol Impairs Academic Performance

- The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism Task Force reports that approximately 25% of college students experience academic difficulties—lower grades, poor performance on exams, failure to attend class—as a result of drinking.
- One national study of nearly 94,000 students found that A students consume on average 3.3 drinks per week, while D or F students consume on average 9.0 drinks per week.
- A national study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health demonstrated that drinking caused 29.5% of students to miss class and 21.6% to fall behind in their studies.
- Other studies suggest a close correlation between drinking and dropping out of school.

Other Potential Negative Effects of Alcohol Consumption

effect	approximate # of college students annually
accidental death	1,400
accidental injury	500,000
assault	600,000
sexual abuse or date rape	70,000
drunk driving	2.1 million

It's expensive, too. The average college student spends \$900 annually on alcohol. Guess what the average cost for books is? Half that amount—about \$450.

BUT wait . . . there's some good news!

- **Moderate** drinkers have a 20 to 40% lower risk of dying from coronary heart disease and a significantly reduced risk of stroke.
- Alcohol consumed in moderate quantities apparently protects the heart in two ways: it boosts the level of "good" HDL cholesterol, and it reduces the risk of blood clots, which can trigger a heart attack

What's a moderate drinker?

Men = 2 drinks/day

Women = 1 drink/day

Don't Be Fooled by the Myths and Half Truths!!!

Women Can Hold Their Liquor as Well as Men

- Women have less water weight in their bodies than men, even when they're exactly the same weight.
- They also metabolize alcohol less efficiently than men.
- The result: women get drunk more readily than men.

A Drink Before Bed Will Help You Sleep

- The sedative qualities of alcohol **will** probably help you fall asleep faster.
- **BUT** on the other hand, your sleep will be much more fitful during the second half of the night.
- You'll tend to wake repeatedly during the night, or very early in the morning.
- The result: you'll probably be more tired when you get up than you would have been without a drink.

If You Don't Feel Tippy, It's Safe to Drive

- The threshold for drunk driving in Texas is a blood-alcohol level of 0.08%. That means about two drinks for the average man and about one drink for the average woman.
- Studies show that college students are notoriously bad at determining their level of intoxication, so don't trust your instincts.
- If you have to drive, do not exceed the moderate-drinking limit i.e. one for women, two for men. Be sure to wait at least one hour, preferably longer, before getting behind the wheel.
- Cabs aren't very expensive, especially if you share one with friends. Programming a cab company's phone number into your cell phone is a good idea.

If You're Going to Party, Party Responsibly!

- Before leaving for an event where you'll be drinking alcohol, decide how many drinks you'll have, and stick to your decision.
- Dilute the alcohol. Mix white wine with sparkling water or lemon-lime soda, or ask the bartender to make your vodka and tonic with only a half-jigger of vodka. Always try to drink at least one large glass of water for each alcoholic beverage.
- Take your alcohol with food. You won't drink as much, and it will take you longer to absorb the alcohol, especially after eating something high in fat.
- Space your drinks prudently. You might have a diluted mixed drink with your hors d'oeuvres then switch to soft drinks or sparkling water until dinner. Nurse a single glass of wine with your meal, supplementing it with water if you're thirsty.
- Sip your drinks slowly.