

EXTREME DRINKING – OVER THE EDGE

MYTHS AND REALITY...

Myth #1: Eating will sober me up.

Reality: Food will slow down the absorption of alcohol, but it will not help you to sober up. No amount of coffee, walking, cold showers or food will help. Remember, the liver can only process about one standard drink of alcohol per hour, so time is the only thing that works.

Myth #2: If I switch from hard liquor to beer, I can drink more and not get as drunk.

Reality: The impact of alcohol is unpredictable. However, it is the amount of ethanol (pure alcohol) consumed and how fast you drink that impacts intoxication, not the type of drink. If you are still consuming equal amounts of the standard size drink, it will have the same effect. If you want a strategy for not getting as drunk, go for drinks with less alcohol content, alternate with pop or juice, and avoid “free pouring”.

Myth #3: Getting smashed is no big deal.

Reality: Research¹ with young adults showed that most felt there is a big difference between drinking to socialize and drinking to get smashed. The same research showed that this group was turned off by slurring, stumbling drinkers. Drinking too much, too fast can put you at risk for more than simple embarrassment, it can lead to injury and alcohol overdose.

Myth #4: Taking two acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) before I go to sleep will lessen my hangover.

Reality: The only thing you can do to reduce your chances of having a hangover is to drink less. A hangover is your body’s response to the toxins in alcohol and to dehydration. Taking drugs such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen in combination with alcohol is risky. It can cause liver damage, stomach problems and depress your central nervous system. Mixing alcohol with any drug is a recipe for trouble. However, because alcohol dehydrates your body, drinking lots of water before you go to bed is a good idea.

Myth #5: I can sleep off alcohol, and I’m okay to drive the next morning.

Reality: If you’ve had the “still drunk feeling” in the morning, it’s because you probably were. Alcohol impairs your balance and coordination and this can last into the next day. It takes about one hour for your body to rid itself of each standard drink. If you are planning to drive or do something else that requires concentration be extra careful because you probably aren’t “all there” yet.

A standard drink – it may be less than you think



| | | | | | |
|--------------------|--|---|--|---|--|
| 1 standard drink = | 341 ml/12-oz. can or bottle of beer 5% alcohol | = | 142 ml/5-oz. glass of wine 13% alcohol | = | 43 ml/1.5-oz. of hard liquor 40% alcohol |
|--------------------|--|---|--|---|--|

Higher alcohol beers and coolers have more alcohol than one standard drink.

A standard drink contains 13.6 grams of alcohol. Here is the number of standard drinks contained in some common purchases:

| | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Case of beer (12-pack, 5% alcohol) | = | 12 standard drinks |
| Bottle of wine (750 ml, 13% alcohol) | = | 5 standard drinks |
| Bottle of rum (750 ml, 40% alcohol) | = | 18 standard drinks |

¹ Alcohol-Related Research Reports with Young Adults Ages 19-29.
www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/addictions/resources.asp

THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL IT TAKES FOR YOU TO PASS OUT
IS DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE AMOUNT IT TAKES TO KILL YOU

IF SOMEONE IS DRUNK ...

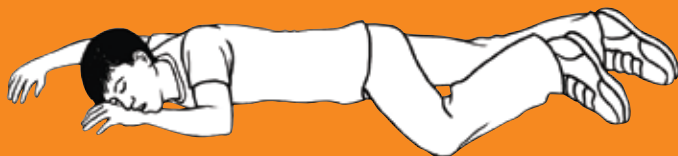
- Don't put them in a cold shower.
- Don't give them something to drink or eat to "help them sober up".
- Don't let them go for a walk.
- Don't let them drive a car, boat or even a bicycle.

SIGNS OF SERIOUS TROUBLE...

- A person has passed out and cannot be awoken.
- They have cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin.
- Their breathing is slow and irregular.
- They vomit in their sleep.

TAKE ACTION!

- If they are conscious but seem confused, take them home and don't let them drink any more.
- Don't let them leave the party with someone they just met.
- If they appear about to pass out or have passed out, turn them onto their side into what is known as the "recovery position". This will help to prevent choking if they vomit.
- If passed out, try to wake them with a shake or pinch.



- If they give no response, but are breathing normally, make sure to monitor their breathing for any changes.
- If breathing is irregular, they appear unconscious, or their skin has a bluish color, call 911 immediately.
- Never leave the person alone.
- Don't let fear about how your friend may react prevent you from getting help when it's needed.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY BODY WHEN I DRINK ALCOHOL

My Body and Alcohol:

- Unlike food, alcohol is not digested. It goes right into your bloodstream and is processed by the liver to get rid of it.
- It affects your brain first by lowering inhibitions and impairing your judgment.
- Add more alcohol, and it impairs coordination, balance, and speech.
- In extreme drinking, the brain starts slowing down your heart rate and breathing.
- That day or the next, your hangover is the body's response to the toxins in alcohol and to dehydration.



HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Sometimes it's difficult to tell during a party if you are consuming too much. Whether or not you choose to drink is up to you. And only you can decide how much is too much.

If you need emergency help, please visit your local emergency department or call 911, or contact a nurse at Telehealth Ontario by dialing 1-866-797-0000.

For non emergency information and treatment:

Drug & Alcohol Registry of Treatment (DART)..... www.dart.ca
Phone (24 hour): 1-800-565-8603

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)..... www.camh.net
CAMH Emergency Department located at 250 College St.
Phone (24 hour): 416-535-8501 ext. 6885

Distress Line..... www.torontodistresscentre.com
Phone (24 hour): 416-408-HELP (4357)

Assaulted Women's Helpline www.awhl.org/services.htm
All crisis line phone numbers below are 24 hour.

*SAFE (*7233) on Bell, Rogers, Telus or Fido cell phones
GTA: 416-863-0511 GTA TTY: 416-364-8762
Toll-Free: 1-866-863-0511 Toll-Free TTY: 1-866-863-7868

Toronto Health Connection www.toronto.ca/health
Monday - Friday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
Phone: 416-338-7600 Translation services available
TTY: 416-392-0658