

Alcohol 101:

Frequently Asked Questions

What Is Alcohol and What Are Its Effects?

Alcohol is an intoxicating ingredient in beer, wine, and liquor. It is produced by yeast fermenting sugars.

Alcohol has an impact on all parts of the body. It is a rapid acting nervous system depressant. It is digested in the stomach and small intestines. It is broken down by the liver but the liver can only process a small amount of alcohol at a time. The remaining alcohol circulates and can accumulate when more is consumed.

What Is a Standard Drink in the United States?

A standard drink is equal to 14.0 grams (0.6 ounces) of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in:

- 12-ounces of beer.
- 5-ounces of wine.
- 1.5-ounces or a “shot” of 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor.

Are Some Alcoholic Beverages Safer to Drink Than Others?

No.

One 12-ounce beer has about the same amount of alcohol as one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5-ounce shot of liquor. It is the amount of alcohol consumed that affects a person most, not the type of alcoholic drink.

Binge drinking is cited by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as a risk factor for sexual assault, particularly for college age women.

Does Alcohol Affect Men and Women Differently?

Yes.

Physical differences in bodies and physiology cause women to absorb more alcohol and metabolize it more slowly. Drinking the same amount will result in higher blood alcohol levels in women. The effects of alcohol happen quicker and last longer putting women more at risk.

What Is Moderate Drinking?

Moderate alcohol consumption is defined as having up to 1 drink per day for women and up to 2 drinks per day for men. This definition is referring to the amount consumed on any single day and is not intended as an average over several days.

What Is Heavy Drinking?

For men, heavy drinking is typically defined as consuming an average of more than 2 drinks per day. For women, heavy drinking is typically defined as consuming an average of more than 1 drink per day.

What Is Binge Drinking?

Binge drinking is consumption that brings the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level to 0.08% or more. This is the legal limit that defines drunk driving. This pattern of drinking usually corresponds to 5 or more drinks on a single occasion for men or 4 or more drinks on a single occasion for women, generally within about a few hours.

Is There a Difference Between Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse?

Abuse is drinking that is harms your health, relationships or work.

- Failure to fulfill responsibilities at work, school, or home.

- Drinking in dangerous situations, such as drinking while driving.
- Legal problems related to alcohol, such as being arrested for drinking while driving or for physically hurting someone while drunk.
- Continued drinking despite ongoing relationship problems that are caused or worsened by drinking.
- Long-term alcohol abuse can turn into alcohol dependence.

Alcoholism is an addiction to alcohol.

- A strong craving for alcohol.
- Continued use despite repeated physical, psychological, or interpersonal problems.
- The inability to limit drinking.

What Are the Risks of Underage Drinking?

Alcohol use by youth and young adults increases the risk of both fatal and nonfatal injuries. Research has also shown that youth who use alcohol before age 15 are five times more likely to become alcohol dependent than adults who begin drinking at age 21. Other consequences of youth alcohol use include increased risky sexual behaviors, poor school performance, and increased risk of suicide and homicide.

**DRINKING
WITH DIABETES**