

Alcohol Facts

Guidelines from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to help you judge what can be considered reasonable and unreasonable alcohol use.

- Moderate alcohol use: 1 drink per day for women
2 drinks per day for men
- Binge alcohol use: 5 or more drinks on the same occasion at least once in the past thirty days
- Heavy alcohol use: 5 or more drinks on the same occasion on at least five different days in the past thirty days

Additionally, here are some equivalencies that will help you determine what qualifies as one or more “drinks.”

- 1 drink = 1 12oz. can of beer, 1 5oz. glass of wine, 1 shot of whiskey
- 1.5 drinks = 1 margarita, 1 daiquiri, 1 wine cooler
- 2 drinks = 1 martini, 1 manhattan

Estimated Blood Alcohol Percentage by Weight

(These figures are approximates. Individuals have different responses)

# Drinks	Body weight in pounds							
	100	120	140	160	180	200	220	240
1	.04	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02
2	.08	.03	.05	.05	.04	.04	.03	.03
3	.11	.06	.08	.07	.06	.06	.05	.05
4	.15	.12	.11	.09	.08	.08	.07	.06
5	.19	.16	.13	.12	.11	.09	.09	.08
6	.23	.19	.16	.14	.13	.11	.10	.09

Alcohol Facts

Continued....

- The Hawaii limit for intoxication while driving is .08 Blood Alcohol Percentage
- The peak effect from drinking occurs about thirty minutes after consumption if the stomach is empty (general range is 30-90 minutes)
- Walking, black coffee or drinking water will not help to sober a person up faster
- Alcohol is lethal in high doses
- Withdrawal from alcohol can be lethal
- Getting sick from alcohol is not caused by mixing drinks, or drinking on an empty stomach (it is the body's way of fighting off alcohol poisoning)
- Blackouts does not mean passing out. It means a loss of memory related to alcohol use. It can happen even when someone appears to be functioning "normally:"

Warning Signs of Problem Drinking

When does someone have a drinking problem? Here are some warning signs:

- Frequently drinks to the point of intoxication
- Consistently misses appointments, classes, etc, due to hangovers (especially Monday mornings!)
- Has blackouts and loss of memory from drinking
- Frequently drinks alone to escape loneliness or boredom
- Often gets injured after drinking
- Excessively denies they have an alcohol problem when approached about their behavior concerning alcohol
- Suffers from chronic hangovers and wants a drink to relieve the hangover
- Under the influence of alcohol, does things they would not otherwise do

And Finally: Remember people get **CAGEY** when it comes to questioning their drinking:

- Feels a need to cut down on their drinking
- Gets annoyed when other comment about their drinking
- Feels guilty about things they have done while under the influence
- Relies on a drink to start the day (eye openers)

Alcohol Poisoning

Alcohol is a psychoactive drug that changes brain chemistry and is lethal in high doses. And although it is legal and socially acceptable, deaths related to alcohol overdoses occur about as often as for other drugs. While alcohol does not kill everyone who drinks you should be aware of signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning and know what to do if you encounter it.

Mild Symptoms:

- Slurred speech
- Stumbling, uneven gait
- Falling, bumping into things
- Difficulty thinking clearly
- Excited and/or unusually chatty
- Emotional volatility, rapid emotional changes

Intervention:

- Keep them up. Keep them hydrated with water. If they fall asleep, then periodically try to arouse them by nudging, rub their chest (sternum) or pinch their toes
- Do not let them walk unattended-they may fall and hurt themselves
- Do not give them food or drinks (except water), medicines or drugs
- Do not let them sleep on their backs. If vomit is inhaled, it may cause choking and possible death
- Have a sober person observe them to watch for signs of trouble for at least an hour.
- Do not give them a cold shower, the shock may cause unconsciousness
- Do not let them drive or bike

Alcohol Poisoning

Continued

Moderate Symptoms:

- Nausea
- One time vomiting
- Paleness
- Skin, clammy
- Abnormal movements such as hand tremor or abnormal eyelid movement
- Sweating

Intervention:

Same as for mild symptoms and:

- Monitor their breathing. Periodically count their breathing. 12-22 breaths is ok, for breathing rates below that, a doctor should be consulted
- Wake them often to make sure they are not unconscious
- Consult with medical staff

Emergency Phone numbers:

Alcohol Poisoning

Continued

Severe Symptoms:

- Continuous vomiting
- Confusion
- Hallucinations (see things, feel things that are not there such as bugs are symptoms of delirium tremens)
- Fever
- Convulsions
- Agitation
- Blood in vomit
- Slowness, shallow or irregular breathing (10 breaths/minute or below)
- ***Any past history of seizures, bleeding ulcers, sclerosis or delirium tremens**
- Passing out, unable to arouse

Intervention:

Call 911. Do not let them “sleep it off.” Get medical help immediately

*Ideally, this information should be obtained as part of an admission process