

ALCOHOL EDUCATION AND MODERATION

July, 2021

Alcohol and the Body

Tolerance:

Over time, a person who drinks regularly has to drink more and more to feel the same effect as they did when they first began drinking. People develop tolerance because they have adapted, both physically and psychologically, to having alcohol in their system. People with high alcohol tolerance need to drink more to feel the effects of alcohol. Higher levels of alcohol use over time increase stress on sensitive internal organs and increase the chances of developing long-term health problems.

Tolerance (and associated health risks) can be decreased fairly easily. Tolerance can be reversed gradually through either moderating the quantity and frequency of your drinking, or taking a break from the alcohol for a few weeks.

A standard drink of alcohol: 12oz Beer; 5oz Glass of Wine; 1.5oz of Liquor

Alcohol Intoxication and Performance

Sleep:

Alcohol negatively affects your sleep. Alcohol intoxication shortens the time necessary to fall asleep, but sleep is usually disturbed and fragmented after just a few hours and prevents the normal cycles of sleep. If you want peak performance (at work, sports, or other engagements), either plan to abstain from alcohol use altogether or drink in moderation.

Biphasic Response of Alcohol in Your Body:

The biphasic response refers to two physiological phases, or sets of effects, that alcohol produces. Feeling stimulated or excited is characteristic of the initial phase. This is followed by the depressant effects, such as feeling tired and nauseous. The initial positive effects are associated with low but rising blood alcohol levels (BAL; the ratio of alcohol to blood in the bloodstream). The second phase effects are associated more with falling BALs.

BAL	Effects of Alcohol on the Body
.02%	Light to moderate drinkers begin to feel some effect
.04%	Most people begin to feel relaxed
.06%	Judgment is somewhat impaired; people are less able to make rational decisions about their capabilities (e.g., driving)
.08%	Definite impairment of muscle coordination and driving skills. Increased risk of nausea and slurred speech. Legal intoxication.
.10%	Clear deterioration of reaction time and control.

Primary Care Behavioral Health

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BAL	Effects of Alcohol on the Body
.15%	Balance and movement are impaired. Risk of blackouts and accidents.
.30%	Many people lose consciousness. Risk of death.
.45%	Breathing stops, death occurs.

Moderating Your Drinking:

Decide what you want from drinking alcohol: Think about the pros and cons (short and long-term) for moderating your use versus maintaining your usual drinking behavior. Also consider what you absolutely want to avoid when you drink.

Set drinking limits:

- What's your upper limit on the number of drinks you consume per week?
- At what point do you decide you've had enough (consider a BAL limit)?
- What's the maximum number of days for drinking per week?

Count your drinks and monitor your drinking behavior:

Most people are surprised by what they learn when they actually pay attention to how much they drink. Make an effort to keep track of the number of drinks you have and how that compares to the drinking limits you want to set.

Alter how and what you drink:

- Switch to drinks that contain less alcohol (e.g., light beers)
- Slow down your pace of drinking
- Space drinks further apart
- Alternate drinking nonalcoholic beverages with alcoholic drinks

**Safe drinking guideline:

- For women, no more than 3 drinks/day; no more than 7 drinks/week.
- For men, no more than 4 drinks/day; no more than 14 drinks/week

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