

Alcohol

AKA: booze, beer, wine, liquor

What is it?

Alcohol is a depressant that comes from organic sources including grapes, grains and berries. These ferment or are distilled into a liquid.

Alcohol affects the central nervous system and brain. It can make users loosen up, relax, and feel more comfortable or can make them more aggressive. Unfortunately, it also lowers their inhibitions, which can set them up for dangerous or embarrassing behavior. Alcohol is a drug and is only legal if you're 21 or older.

Who uses it?

Alcohol is the most-used drug in the country. Among teens, it is the number one abused substance. Over 50 percent of seniors in high school reported drinking in the past month.

What does it do?

Alcohol can make you feel silly, uninhibited and buzzed. You may feel more confident, comfortable or relaxed, and then as the alcohol leaves your system you feel drowsy and sleepy. This can lead to drinking more alcohol to keep your "buzz" going.

The problem is alcohol messes with your ability to control your muscles, mind, and mouth. It blocks the messages going through your brain, and changes your perceptions and emotions. It affects your eyesight, hearing, coordination and reactions, making it difficult to act normally. A number of people also experience nasty hangovers afterwards, which can result from your body being dehydrated by the alcohol. Alcohol also has a high calorie content.

How does alcohol work?

Alcohol affects every part of the body--it is carried through the bloodstream to the brain, stomach, internal organs, liver, kidneys, muscles--everywhere. It is absorbed very quickly (as short as 5-10 minutes) and can stay in the body for several hours.

Overdose occurs among younger drinkers because they try to drink too much, too fast. This can result in alcohol poisoning. When alcohol poisoning occurs, the person may pass out and can end up choking on their vomit.

Alcohol can also decrease guys' sperm count and increase their chance of impotence. In the long term, alcohol use can lead to vitamin deficiencies, stomach problems, major liver damage, heart problems, kidney damage, and brain problems such as memory loss.

What about alcohol and driving?

Eight young people a day die in alcohol-related crashes. Alcohol makes it difficult to drive a car with any intelligence or coordination at all. Do not drink and drive.

What is alcoholism?

Alcoholism is a disease, kind of like diabetes or high blood pressure. And although many people see it in a very negative light, it is not something to be ashamed of. It is a treatable disease, and thousands of teens are finding help for it through Alcoholics Anonymous.

Quick Facts

Know the law. Alcohol is illegal to buy or possess if you are under 21.

Get the facts right. One 12-ounce beer has as much alcohol as a 1.5-ounce shot of whiskey or a 5-ounce glass of wine. And it affects each person differently. For instance, women's bodies react more quickly to alcohol.

Stay informed. Wine coolers look like juice sparklers but they have just as much alcohol as a 12-ounce beer. One glass of clear malt can give a teenager a .02 on a Breathalyzer test. In some states, that amount is enough for anyone under the age of 21 to lose his/her driver's license and be subject to a fine.

Be aware of the risks. Drinking increases the risk of injury. Car crashes, falls, burns, drowning, and other dangerous behaviors are all linked to alcohol and other drug use. When you're not thinking straight, you're more likely to get pulled into bad situations.

Keep your edge. Alcohol can ruin your looks, give you bad breath, and make you gain weight.

Play it safe. Drinking can lead to intoxication and even death from alcohol poisoning.

Do the smart thing. Drinking puts your health, education, family ties, and social life at risk.

Be a real friend. If you know someone with a drinking problem, be part of the solution. Urge your friend to get help.

Remain alert. Stay clear on claims that alcohol means glamour and adventure. Stay clear on what's real and what an illusion is.

Sweep away the myths. Having a designated driver is no excuse to drink. Drinking only at home or sticking only to beer does not make drinking any "safer."

*Source: freevibe.com