



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ALCOHOL

What is alcohol?

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that slows down bodily functions and can cause intoxication, unconsciousness or even death. Because of its widespread availability, alcohol is the most commonly abused drug in this country. Even though it is legal for persons over 21, it is just as powerful and dangerous as many prescription and illegal drugs. In fact, it is involved in almost half of all suicides, murders and accidental deaths in the United States. It claims more than 100,000 lives each year – more than 25 times all illegal drugs combined. Alcohol is contained in beer, wine, wine coolers, brandy, bourbon, champagne, cognac, gin, rum, rye, scotch, whiskey, vodka, etc.

What does alcohol do?

Alcohol is absorbed by the stomach and small intestines into the bloodstream, then carried directly to the brain. How quickly it takes effect depends on many factors, including:

1. How much and how rapidly the person is drinking
2. Individual body weight
3. Tolerance level
4. Gender
5. Age of the drinker
6. How much food is in the person's stomach
7. Person's mood expectations
8. Previous experiences with alcohol

Here is a typical sequence of effects that occur with progressive amounts of alcohol:

When the BAC reaches 0.05%, the effects include:

1. Diminished memory and ability to concentrate
2. Impaired judgment
3. Impaired vision
4. Lengthened reaction time
5. Lowered inhibitions
6. Poor muscular coordination
7. Temporary feelings of well-being

At BAC of 0.10 to 0.20%, the effects include:

1. Emotional overreaction
2. Impaired coordination
3. Seriously impaired judgment and reasoning
4. Severely lengthened reaction time

At BAC of 0.20 to 0.3%, the effects include:

1. Aggressive, reckless behavior
2. Slurred speech
3. Staggering
4. Unpredictability of emotions

At BAC above 0.30% is extremely dangerous. Possible effects include:

1. Convulsions
2. Unconsciousness
3. Death

Short-term effects of alcohol

1. Decreased blood pressure
2. Decreased respiration rate
3. Dizziness
4. Lower body temperature
5. Nausea and vomiting
6. Reddened eyes
7. Sweating
8. Shakiness

Long-term effects of alcohol

Alcohol is a common factor in suicide, one of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States. It also plays a role in much of the domestic violence and child abuse that occurs in our society. Many violent crimes, such as murders, manslaughter, robberies, sexual assaults and physical assaults are committed by those under the influence of alcohol. It is also implicated in a large number of accidental deaths, such as drowning accidents, falls and fires. Alcohol-related traffic crashes are the leading cause of death among youth 16 to 24, killing more than 10,000 young people each year.

Chronic use of alcohol can damage nearly every organ and system in the body. It can cause:

1. Brain damage
2. Cancer
3. Cirrhosis of the liver
4. Heart disease
5. High blood pressure
6. Impaired kidney function
7. Impaired immune system
8. Malnutrition
9. Stroke
10. Sexual Dysfunction
11. Ulcers