

newsletter

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QUICK TAKES

Does Alcohol Affect Women Differently?



It's true that alcohol affects women differently than men. Women become more impaired than men do after drinking the same amount of alcohol, even when differences in body weight are taken into account.

This is because, pound for pound, women have less water in their bodies than men. Because alcohol mixes with body water, alcohol becomes more highly concentrated in a woman's body than in a man's.

That is why the recommended drinking limit for women is one drink per day compared with two drinks per day for men.

In addition, chronic alcohol abuse takes a heavier physical toll on women than on men. Alcohol dependence and related medical problems, such as brain, heart and liver damage, progress more rapidly in women than in men.

Alcohol and Your Health

It's clear that excessive alcohol use over months and years can cause significant health problems, including:

- Liver disease
- High blood pressure and heart disease
- Type 2 diabetes
- Neurological and psychological problems
- Pancreatitis
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Increased risk for certain cancers

Occasional alcohol consumption carries health risks as well. Summer fun and alcohol can create an especially dangerous mix. Alcohol affects balance, coordination and judgment, and these effects are heightened by sun and heat.

A single drink can impact your ability to observe and react -- two vital skills in the event of an emergency. In addition, many summer recreational activities rely on your coordination and balance skills, so your favorite activity may become especially dangerous after a drink or two. Also, once you're less able to help someone else who's been injured, alcohol poses a threat to summer safety for drinkers and nondrinkers alike.

Let's look at some of the specific occasions where alcohol consumption could negatively impact your summer fun.

Swimming

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that alcohol use is involved in nearly half of adolescent and adult deaths associated with water recreation. Do not swim or dive if you have been drinking. Remember that alcohol will inhibit your swallowing and breathing reflexes, both of which are necessary for swimming. Drinking affects your ability to judge distances and may lead you to swim too far out. This danger, compounded by alcohol's effects on your swimming ability, is a common cause of drowning.

Boating

The U.S. Coast Guard reports that alcohol is the No. 1 contributing factor to fatal boating accidents. Never drink and pilot a boat of any kind. If you are riding in a boat, remember that alcohol will impair your balance and increase your chances of falling overboard.

Summer Sports

Windsurfing, wake boarding, kite boarding, waterskiing or any summer sport that involves speed and skill can be dangerous to someone who has been drinking. Remember that alcohol will impair your performance in most sports, making you more vulnerable to accident and injury.

Don't Quench Your Thirst with Alcohol

While a frozen cocktail or an ice-cold beer might sound like ideal thirst quenchers, they're not. Drinks that contain alcohol will actually make you more dehydrated. Alcohol is a diuretic. This means it increases urination and can lead to dehydration, not rehydration. After a hot day in the sun, rehydrate with water first before enjoying a moderate amount of alcohol.

Host Responsibly

When hosting a cookout, poolside party or other summer gathering that includes alcohol, never force drinks on guests and don't rush to refill their glasses. Reassure guests who don't want to drink alcohol that they can still have fun. Remember also:

- Do not serve beer, wine or other alcoholic drinks to anyone under 21. It is illegal.
- Always serve food when offering alcoholic beverages. Eating slows down the absorption of alcohol.
- Keep alcoholic beverages on the "light" side. For mixed drinks, be prudent with the alcohol and generous with the mixers and ice. Stock light and ultra-light beers. They contain less alcohol and fewer calories! Keep club soda chilled and ready for wine spritzers.
- Be sure to offer plenty of appealing nonalcoholic drinks.
- DON'T LET PEOPLE DRINK AND DRIVE. Car-pooling and cabs can save lives. It's the responsibility of EVERYONE (especially the host of the party) to stop people who have had too much to drink from driving.

How can a person get help for an alcohol problem?

There are many national and local resources that can help. The National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service provides a toll-free telephone number, **1-800-662-HELP(4357)**, offering various resource information. Through this service you can speak directly to a representative concerning substance abuse treatment, request printed material on alcohol or other drugs, or obtain local substance abuse treatment referral information in your area.

Sources: National Institutes of Health National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction

Alcohol-Free Thirst-Quenchers

Pomgría: Thinly slice 2 lemons and 1 orange and place in a large pitcher. Add 16 ounces orange juice, 16 ounces lemonade and 12 ounces seltzer. Pour in a 24-ounce bottle of pomegranate juice. Chill well before serving over ice.

120 calories per 8-oz glass

The Arnold Palmer: Mix 2 parts (unsweetened) black tea with 1 part lemonade. Serve over cracked ice. Garnish with a lemon twist.

35 calories per 8-oz glass

Jamaica Ginger Juice: In a blender, puree one 12-ounce can frozen pineapple juice concentrate and 1/4 cup crystallized ginger pieces. Transfer to a large pitcher and stir in 2 quarts cold water and plenty of ice.

95 calories per 8-oz glass

Nojitos: In the bottom of a pitcher, bruise with a large wooden spoon or cocktail muddler: 2 handfuls fresh mint leaves, 3 tablespoons raw cane sugar and 1 teaspoon grated lime zest. Add the juice of 8 limes and 1 quart (32 oz) chilled club soda or seltzer. Serve over crushed ice.

40 calories per 8-oz glass



Source: Healthy Living Kitchens
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