

ALL DEFENSES DOWN

When you consume too much alcohol too fast, it acts as a poison.

Your body has built-in defense mechanisms that help protect you from poisoning yourself with alcohol:

- Vomiting – This is a way for your body to get rid of alcohol when the blood levels get too high.
- Passing Out – If you are passed out, you can't drink anymore.

If you vomit while you are passed out, you can choke.

TOO MUCH - TOO FAST

When you drink too much too fast, your defense mechanisms get overwhelmed. If your blood alcohol rises too quickly, you can get alcohol poisoning which can lead to brain damage or death. Binge drinking, or drinking too much too fast- like drinking quickly outside before an event is what can cause you to get too drunk and this can happen very quickly. If you are going to drink, pace yourself.

WHAT EFFECTS CAN ALCOHOL HAVE ON ME?

- Your coordination is impaired. This leads to clumsiness and difficulty walking.
- Your reflexes are slowed which increases the possibility of serious accidents.
- If you mix alcohol with other drugs, you could be putting your life in danger. Remember alcohol alone can cause death.
- You lose your inhibitions and act in ways that you may not normally behave. Common drinking behaviours include making a fool of yourself, having unprotected sex (which can lead to pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases), driving or getting into a car with someone who is drunk.
- You could become more aggressive and engage in violent behaviour.
- Over the long term alcohol use can lead to depression, high blood pressure, heart and liver damage.
- Excessive drinking can decrease the amount of testosterone in a man's body and lead to impotence.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

"I've only had two drinks – I'm OK!"

It is not how many drinks that you have BUT how much alcohol you swallow over a period of time. The amount of alcohol in your blood can depend on:

- the alcohol content of your chosen drink (hard liquor is five times stronger than beer).
- how quickly you drink.
- your height and weight.
- your gender (girls absorb alcohol faster than guys and metabolize it slower).
- what you ate and when.
- how much sleep you have had.
- what medications you are on or what drugs you have used.
- your body temperature and room temperature.

Different people experience different effects of alcohol. **YOU CAN NEVER PREDICT HOW IT WILL AFFECT YOU.**

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

These are signs of alcohol poisoning.

- You pass out (fall asleep and cannot be wakened).
- You have cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin.
- Your breathing is slow or irregular.
- You vomit while you are sleeping and you don't wake up.

If you see someone who is showing signs of trouble, you must act immediately. This person is in danger. Take these steps:

1. Call an ambulance.
2. Roll the person into the "recovery position" (on their side with their head facing down towards the floor) so they won't choke if they vomit.
3. Do not leave the person alone. Stay with them and monitor breathing until medical help arrives.
4. You can go downhill very quickly if you drink fast, so if a friend is very drunk, get help fast.

FAST FACTS ABOUT ALCOHOL

1. Not all drinks are created equal – a "drink of alcohol" is one can of beer, 4 oz. of wine (half of a standard glass), or 1 oz. of hard liquor.
2. Alcohol can ruin your looks, give you bad breath, and make you gain weight (it has A LOT of calories).
3. Get real – partying and drinking are not always glamorous. Beer commercials are not the real thing.
4. Play it safe – drinking can lead to alcohol poisoning and death.
5. Be a friend – if you know someone with a drinking problem, urge them to get help.
6. No excuses – having a designated driver is no excuse to drink. Drinking at home or sticking only to beer does not make drinking any "safer."

RESOURCES

Provincial Youth Mental Health & Substance Use Program

BC Children's Hospital
C400-4480 Oak Street
604-875-2010
www.bcchildrens.ca/Services/ChildYouthMentalHlth

Vancouver Health Units

All provide addictions/substance-use counseling. Referrals are available or you can simply call the clinic closest to the area you live. Prevention services also available.
www.vch.ca/addictions/index.htm

DEYAS (Downtown Eastside Youth Activities Society) - Youth Action Coalition

(outreach, life skills, 1:1 support, drop in services for youth in Downtown eastside)
41 West Cordova St 604-602-9747
www.deyas.org

Broadway Youth Resource Centre

691 E. Broadway 604-709-5720
www.nisha.org/byrc/home.htm

Self Help & Crisis Interventions

Vancouver Crisis Line 604-872-3311
Alcohol & Drug information & referral services 604-660-9382
Alateen 604-6881716

For resources outside Vancouver, please contact your local health unit.

Developed by the Department of Youth Services with assistance from the Department of Learning & Development

THANK YOU TO NICOLE, KRISTIN, NAKITA, AND ALL THE OTHER YOUTH THAT HELPED DEVELOP THIS PAMPHLET

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