

Fact Sheet

Drinking and Alcohol



☐ Alcohol is a psychoactive drug. It affects your senses, thoughts, emotions and behaviour. In Canada, the most commonly used drug is alcohol.



☐ 80% of the alcohol drunk by Canadians is in the form of beer.

☐ The legal drinking age in all provinces and territories of Canada is 19 except for Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta where it is 18.

☐ A standard drink contains 13.6 g of alcohol. Standard drinks are:

- ☐ 355 ml (12 ounce) can of 5% beer
- ☐ 146 ml (5 ounce) glass of 10% to 12% wine
- ☐ 44 ml (1.5 ounce) of 40% hard liquor or spirits
- ☐ All of the above standard drinks have the same amount of alcohol in them.



☐ In a 2004 national survey, 1 in 3 Canadians reported experiencing harm in the past year because of someone else's drinking.

☐ In Canada, half of all substance abuse treatment involves alcohol.

☐ Heavy drinking means you drink too much on one occasion or over a long period of time. It can lead to liver, brain and nerve damage as well as alcohol addiction.



☐ Short-term heavy drinking is sometimes referred to as binge drinking. It is linked to alcohol poisoning, violent and non-violent injuries, and aggression.

☐ It takes about 90 minutes for your body to absorb and eliminate one standard drink. The exact time depends on factors such as:

- ☐ how much you weigh;
- ☐ whether you are male or female;
- ☐ the strength of your drinks;
- ☐ how old you are;
- ☐ your drinking history.



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Alcohol and your Body



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- ☐ Developing a tolerance for more alcohol over time is a sign of alcohol dependence.
- ☐ Factors that affect how intoxicated you get when you drink are:
 - ☐ how fast you drink;
 - ☐ if you ate before or while you were drinking;
 - ☐ your body size and build;
 - ☐ if you are male or female.
- ☐ If a male and female drink the same amount, the female will be more affected by the alcohol even if they have a similar build and body weight. On average, women weigh less than men and have less water in their bodies, so alcohol is less diluted and has a stronger impact.
- ☐ Caffeine and other substances found in energy drinks won't sober you up because they don't reduce the amount of alcohol in your body or the time it takes you to process it. The only thing that will make you sober is time.
- ☐ If you eat before or while you drink, you will not get as drunk as a person who drinks on an empty stomach. The food causes the alcohol to stay in your stomach longer where it is absorbed more slowly.
- ☐ Your blood alcohol content or BAC is the percent of alcohol in your blood. Your BAC increases when your body absorbs alcohol faster than it can eliminate it.
- ☐ If mixed with alcohol, certain antibiotics can cause nausea, vomiting, and stomach cramps.
- ☐ You may be suffering from alcohol poisoning if you:
 - ☐ have bluish, cold or clammy skin;
 - ☐ vomit without waking up;
 - ☐ don't respond when someone pinches you;
 - ☐ breathe less than 8 times a minute.
- ☐ If you fall asleep or pass out, your body continues to absorb the alcohol you drank up to that point.
- ☐ When you drink, the alcohol spreads quickly and evenly throughout your body fluids and tissues. In pregnant women, the brain of the fetus also absorbs alcohol.
- ☐ Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is the result of a women drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Its characteristics include birth defects and permanent damage to the baby's brain.
- ☐ There is no known safe level of drinking alcohol for pregnant women. Experts strongly recommend that a woman who is or could be pregnant stop drinking altogether.

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Alcohol and Injury



☐ Your risk of head injury increases as your blood alcohol level increases. A study showed that among trauma patients who had been binge drinking, the most common causes of head injuries were assaults, falls and bicycling accidents.



☐ Research shows that a lot of the harmful things people experience when they drink happen when they have 5 or more standard drinks on one occasion.

☐ In Canada, the highest rate of impaired-driving deaths occurs at age 19.

☐ In Canada, impaired driving is the most common criminal offence.



☐ Vehicle crashes caused by drunk drivers are not accidents, since they happen because of a driver's conscious decision to drive while impaired.

☐ A driver with a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.10% is 50 times more likely to be involved in a fatal crash than a driver with no blood alcohol.

☐ A Canadian study of snowmobile drinking and driving deaths found that 70% of deaths were a result of either a collision with an object or a snowmobile falling through ice.



☐ Passengers who drink on a boat are more likely to fall overboard or drown than sober passengers. This is true even if the operator has not been drinking and the boat is not moving.

☐ In a study of drowning deaths between 1997 and 2001, one in four victims had a blood alcohol content (BAC) at or above 0.08%.



☐ Some people choke on their vomit when they pass out drunk. When your body has a certain blood alcohol content (BAC), the alcohol slows down your gag reflex to the point where it no longer works properly. Instead of being ejected out of your mouth, the vomit stays in your throat, causing you to choke.

☐ The recovery position is used to prevent people from choking on their own vomit. To put someone in the recovery position you:

- ☐ Raise the person's arm above their head.
- ☐ Roll them on their side towards you.
- ☐ Tilt their head to make sure their airway is open.
- ☐ Tuck the nearest hand under their cheek to maintain the position of the head.
- ☐ Keep an eye on them, look for signs of alcohol poisoning and call for help.

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Alcohol and Aggression



☐ Some people become more aggressive when they drink. Others are more likely to place themselves in risky situations and become victims of violence.



☐ Around the world, alcohol is linked to more acts of aggression and violence than any other legal or illegal drug.

☐ Research shows that alcohol does not cause a person to be violent but it does increase the likelihood that a person, especially a man, will turn to violence in certain situations.



☐ Alcohol reduces your inhibitions so socially unacceptable behaviours such as aggression are more likely to occur.

☐ Heavy drinkers are more likely to be both perpetrators and victims of violence.

☐ If they have been drinking, people are more likely to intentionally hurt others, or to have violence inflicted on them.

☐ One Canadian survey found that 5% of females and 24% of males had their most recent experience of aggression in a bar.



☐ A Canadian study of emergency room departments found that 42% of patients with violent injuries had a blood alcohol content over .08%

☐ Alcohol impairs your perception and judgment. This makes it harder to interpret other people's words and actions, especially when you don't know them well. This can increase your risk of being a victim of sexual assault.



☐ In Canada, a sexual assault victim can press charges even if they and their attacker were both drunk at the time the assault occurred.

☐ Under the Criminal Code of Canada, people who commit sexual assault are criminally responsible for their actions, even if they were drunk at the time.

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