

Alcohol's Effects on the Body

Harvard Health publications examined the effects of alcohol on the body. According to the experts at Harvard School of Medicine, alcohol depresses the central nervous system, slowing your motor coordination and reaction time, harming judgment, memory, reasoning, and self-control.

Although alcohol is a sedative, it disturbs sleep as its effects wear off and is a major cause of insomnia and other health problems.

Harvard Health publication outlines the following five effects of alcohol on the body:

1) Processing alcohol:

- a. The size of your body, whether or not you have eaten recently, and the rate at which you drink all affect how your body processes alcohol.
- b. Alcohol concentration in larger people rises more slowly than in a smaller person, even if they drink identical amounts of alcohol.
- c. Food slows the rate at which alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream. It is ideal to have food in your stomach when you drink, or to drink only during meals.

2) Effect on women:

- a. Drink for drink, women accumulate more alcohol in their bloodstreams than men do.
This is because women's bodies process alcohol differently than men's bodies do.
- b. Women have lower levels of the stomach enzyme that neutralizes alcohol before it moves into the bloodstream.
- c. Women tend to have a higher proportion of body fat, which does not absorb alcohol; this increases alcohol levels in the blood.

3) Driving: There is no safe way to combine drinking and driving.

4) Pregnancy:

- a. According to the experts, there is no safe level of drinking during pregnancy.

- b. Women who are trying to get pregnant or who already are pregnant should not drink. It can lead to a group of problems collectively known as Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Symptoms include:

- c. Behavior and attention problems
- d. Heart defects
- e. Changes in the shape of the face
- f. Poor growth before and after birth
- g. Poor muscle tone and problems with movement and balance
- h. Problems with thinking and speech
- i. Learning problems

5) Teen drinking:

- a. Drinking harms concentration, learning, and performance at school and at home with a dramatic impact on personality and can bring on irritability, hostility, and aggression.
- b. Teens who drink alcohol are more likely to experiment with other drugs, and run the risk of becoming addicted to them.
- c. Young men and women in this age group are also at risk of death, drinking-related injury, property damage, date rape, and unsafe sex while under the influence of alcohol.

For further information regarding this article by Harvard Health, please see

<http://t.co/XNAC6CodXv/s/Pgsr>. Or contact Wendy Jefferson, M.A.Ed. Wendy.jefferson@emory.edu at

the Center for Maternal Substance Abuse and Child Development, Emory University School of Medicine, Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, 12 Executive Park Drive NE, Atlanta,

Georgia, 30329. You can also phone us at 404-727-3354 or visit our website at

<http://www.emory.edu/MSACD>

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