

# the **RED CUP** Q&A



**separating alcohol fact from fiction**  
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## **Q** Is it true that you can get herpes from playing Beer Pong?

**A.** This would be a very rare, but theoretically possible, occurrence if a cup were used by someone with an active herpes simplex sore and then immediately used by another person. Viruses such as herpes that affect the skin and mucous membranes do not survive long on inanimate objects. Viruses need “host” cells to support their existence.

In most cases, herpes is transmitted sexually through direct skin-to-skin contact (e.g. lips, genitals). When a herpes sore (or “fever blister”) is present, transmission risk is obvious. Less evident are the times when a person sheds the herpes virus without the presence of sores, thus infecting others. So, a person may look absolutely “fine” yet have transmissible virus present on their skin

We know of at least one case on our campus where a student transmitted a herpes infection from a sore on their body to their eye when putting in a contact lens. Students with herpes should be careful to thoroughly wash their hands to avoid re-infecting themselves or others.

Respiratory and gastrointestinal viruses are more likely than herpes to live on a beer pong cup. Transmission can occur by touching saliva, respiratory secretions or the residue from unwashed hands that share the cup.

The more people touch and share objects, the more probable illnesses are to spread. All in all, there is probably a much greater health risk posed by what is in the cup, than what is on it. People are much more likely to get herpes after drinking and having risky sex than from sharing a red cup during beer pong.



### wildfact

**A beer with 6% alcohol has one third more alcohol than a beer with 4.5% alcohol.**

### Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to [redcup@email.arizona.edu](mailto:redcup@email.arizona.edu) and have a chance to win a \$100 Best Buy gift card during the Spring 2010 semester.



The Red Cup Q&A is written by Lynn Reyes, LCSW, LSAC, David Salafsky, MPH and Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.