

# the RED CUP Q&A



**separating alcohol fact from fiction**

EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## Q Do women get beer bellies?

**A.** Unfortunately, evidence indicates that women have equal opportunity to develop beer bellies as much as men. "Muffin tops," or beer bellies, would be better described as "binge bellies" since *how* you drink plays a significant role in where you gain weight.

A University College of London study found that binge drinkers were not necessarily heavier than those who did not binge – they just had more belly fat. Similarly, research on almost 30,000 people in Russia found that drinking large amounts of alcohol in a single session is the likely cause of an expanding waistline, particularly for women, rather than more steady drinking over time. In men who binge drink, there is a general two inch increase in waist size. Women, however, are prone to gaining about four. But for both sexes, it's not just the volume that leads to weight gain, it's the pattern.

Excessive drinking results in weight gain. Our body converts alcohol into acetate which is used for energy. The problem is that when acetate is being used for energy, fat is not. Therefore, the more alcohol you drink, the more acetate your body will have to burn, the less stored fat you use, and the more you will accumulate fat. Utilizing acetate also causes blood sugar levels to swing, which can trigger hunger and a desire to eat more. By lowering our inhibitions, alcohol can further lead to weight gain.

It is safe to say that if you've seen significant weight gain in the abdominal region from drinking alcohol, you may want to consider moderating your intake.

So what can you do? The obvious answer is reducing the amount of alcohol you drink. Become aware of the empty calories of your favorite beverage. A twelve ounce bottle of light beer contains 100-110 calories compared to 150 or more in regular beer. A four oz. mojito is about 200 calories less than a four oz. margarita. A five oz. glass of wine has 100 calories. There are 179 calories in one Red Bull and Vodka which would take you 30 minutes in generalized activity at the gym to burn off. After moderating alcohol intake, cardio activity is the second most significant thing you can do to reduce unwanted belly fat. Reducing the amount of calories coming in is more efficient in reducing belly fat than doing a zillion crunches.



wildfact

To check out your calorie totals on a "per drink," weekly and monthly basis visit: [www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov](http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov)

**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.

CAMPUS  
HEALTH  
SERVICE  
[www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu)

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