

the **RED CUP** Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Why do some people take pride in their tolerance, while some people are ashamed of how much they can drink?

A. The answer to your question lies in the fact that people view alcohol use and its potential abuse differently. Tolerance is a description of how accustomed the body has become to a drug. It can happen with most drugs, such as cocaine, morphine, xanax, caffeine, nicotine, and alcohol. Coffee drinkers, who drink multiple cups of java each morning, usually develop tolerance to caffeine. Over time, larger doses (more cups or stronger brews) are required to achieve the same result that one cup used to deliver. Heavy smokers gradually require more cigarettes each day to get the same effect that a few cigarettes used to give them.

With alcohol, tolerance develops from heavy and consistent drinking. During subsequent drinking episodes, a person will need more alcohol to feel the same effects that they felt earlier. Occasional drinkers don't develop tolerance. It is repeated, steady use of a substance that leads the body to become habituated.

The person who takes pride in their tolerance may rationalize that their heavy drinking and escalating consumption indicates that they are tough and "in control." The tolerant drinker may look sober or show few signs of intoxication even though their blood alcohol concentration (BAC) may be very high. Drinkers with tolerance are not immune to harm and injury from heavy drinking – they simply don't appear as inebriated as their blood level would indicate.

Some drinkers may fear that their ability to consume large amounts of alcohol (without appearing drunk) demonstrates that their body is adapting to a problematic level and can bring feelings of embarrassment or shame. In fact, tolerance is often a warning sign that a person may be on their way to becoming addicted to alcohol.

Campus Health offers free and confidential sessions with an alcohol specialist. If you want personalized feedback about your drinking, call 621-5700 and ask for the BASICS program.



wildfact

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant. Too much alcohol can impair a male's ability to get or maintain an erection.

Got a question about alcohol?

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



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