

the

RED CUP

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Can alcohol affect your sleeping habits?

A. Well, yeah, and in a big way. Sleep disturbances due to alcohol consumption can be just as intrusive as those guys in the movie *Inception*. BTW, great movie and pretty cool effects... but I digress.

Alcohol can disturb normal sleep patterns by disrupting sleep states, altering total sleep time, and increasing the time required to fall asleep (i.e., sleep latency). This results in fatigue and physical stress to your body. Sleep deprivation exacerbates daytime sleepiness, irritability, and alcohol-induced performance impairments. If you haven't experienced this personally, you've probably sat next to someone in class who has.

Alcohol consumption may even induce sleep disorders. There's a connection between obstructive sleep apnea (repeated cessation of breathing) and alcohol consumption. Drinkers can experience apnea, if only for a night. Alcohol impairs breathing in sleep by relaxing the throat muscles and affecting the brain's breathing center by masking the effect of low oxygen levels in the bloodstream. And here's an unpleasant thought: even people who normally don't snore may do so if they have been drinking. Snorers without apnea can also exhibit apnea if they have been drinking.

Not getting enough sleep, poor quality of sleep, and frequent awakenings are often part of campus life. Adding alcohol doesn't help. Although some people believe that a drink before bed can aid in falling asleep, alcohol often creates more sleep problems than it solves. Over time, people can even develop a tolerance to alcohol's sedative effects.

The take-home message regarding drinking and sleep is to put on your favorite jammies, sleep with a familiar pillow, avoid eating late, and drink moderately* to keep Freddy and other nightmares from following you into slumberland and the next day.

For more information on sleep: www.sleepfoundation.org

* NIAAA Designates moderate drinking as less than 14 drinks/week for men and 7 drinks/week for women.



wildfact

43% of UA students reported receiving a lower grade on an exam or important project due to poor sleep or sleep difficulties. (2010 Health & Wellness Survey, N=2,931)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



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