

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Which is it, “beer before liquor” or “liquor before beer”?

A. We get asked this question a lot! It’s based on the sayings “liquor before beer, you’re in the clear; beer before liquor, never sicker.” Drinkers want to know which statement is “true,” and some swear from their personal experiences that one or the other works for them. The premise is that drinkers are trying to find ways to avoid getting sick from drinking, and believe that the secret lies in the order in which different types of alcohol are consumed. There’s also a belief that mixing different types of alcohol can make a drinker sick.

We’re sorry to say that neither statement is scientifically proven. So why do some drinkers feel sick?

- The most common reason for feeling sick during or after drinking is drinking too much. Whether it’s shots, mixed drinks, beer, or any combination of these beverages, too much is too much. When drinkers get sick, it’s easy to look for the cause and assume it was due to a consumption pattern other than quantity. In reality, our body absorbs alcohol and doesn’t “recognize” the difference between a vodka shot or Keystone Light beer (taste preference is another topic).
- However, the fact is that alcohol can be an irritant in our system, causing inflammation of the stomach lining. Alcohol in the stomach stimulates the secretion of hydrochloric acid. Basically, you may feel nauseous sometimes.
- Another major factor is drinking on an empty stomach which increases your chances of feeling more intoxicated (translation: sick). Consuming food before drinking slows alcohol absorption and minimizes the likelihood of feeling sick.
- Some drinkers have a sensitivity or allergy to sulfites that are added to alcohol or are present as a natural by-product of wine fermentation.
- Blame congeners. Alcohol with more congeners may lead to more side effects like headaches and nausea.

So the answer is to drink moderately; for males, that’s less than 5 drinks over a 2 hour period, and for females, less than 4 drinks over 2 hours.



wildfact

80% of UA students typically party one night a week or less. (2010 Health & Wellness Survey, N=2,931)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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