

the RED CUP

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q What effect does alcohol have on my sexual performance?

A. It depends on how much alcohol we're talking about. People often think of alcohol as an aphrodisiac, a sure method of arousing desire in ourselves or a partner. The truth is that alcohol is neither an aphrodisiac nor stimulant for sex. Having a drink or two will relax you, but getting way too relaxed may result in things not working the way you want them to. Remember that sex takes coordination even when sober, so getting intoxicated can negatively impact performance. Both males and females report an intoxicated partner is a turn-off, so you may not get anywhere – romantically speaking – if you've overdone it. And if you black out, you won't even remember what happened (100,000 students between 18-24 report having been too intoxicated to know if they have consented to having sex. - Hingson et al., 2002).

Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant that relaxes you when used in moderation. Said another way, alcohol depresses the nerve centers in the hypothalamus that control sexual arousal and performance. As blood alcohol concentration (BAC) increases, sexual behavior increases, but sexual performance declines. This is more important for males because with a "depressed" system, it takes more arousal to make things work. Long term effects of excessive alcohol use decreases blood circulation, which in turn negatively impacts one's ability to get or sustain an erection.

Research has shown that alcohol increases the breakdown and removal of testosterone from the blood and decreases testosterone production rates. If you have a problem getting or maintaining an erection and you think it may be related to excessive alcohol consumption, cut back on your drinking for 3-4 weeks to see if the situation improves.

A related effect is that we're more likely to take sexual risks when our inhibitions are lowered. Risks include having sex with someone we wouldn't if sober, forgetting to use protection, or using it improperly; basically, having impaired judgment. Also, 50% of student sexual assaults involve alcohol (K. Horner, University at Albany, SUNY).

So use alcohol for its benefits and skip the negatives.



wildfact

98% of UA students going out on a date prefer to be with someone who doesn't drink or drinks moderately and stays in control. (2010 Health & Wellness Survey, N=2,931)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



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.