

the

RED CUP

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Why do people have different emotional reactions to alcohol?

A. When it comes to alcohol, context and quantity count. In general terms, alcohol use lowers your inhibitions, allowing your emotions to be amplified. It's no surprise that if you drink when you are down, you will likely feel worse. This happens because alcohol's depressant qualities will magnify the very feelings you may be trying to avoid. On the other hand, drinking during good times will likely make you feel social and celebratory – provided you don't overindulge.

What about different types of alcohol? Does rum make you merry, tequila make you tipsy, or whisky turn things risky? The reality is that all of these drinks have the identical chemical form of alcohol, also known as ethanol. They may taste different or have varying strengths (% alcohol), but it's all the same ethanol no matter what you are drinking.

Here's the lowdown on quantity and its effect on emotions: alcohol has not one, but two principal phases – the first of which acts like a stimulant. After the first few drinks, most people feel energetic and outgoing. Ask individuals what they like about drinking and this is what they tend to enjoy most. It's the part that puts us at ease at parties, dispels our worries, and gives a pleasant “buzzed” feeling. However, if you keep drinking and go beyond a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of around .05, these stimulant effects fade and are replaced by alcohol's drunk/depressant effects. In this phase, alcohol slows you down, physical impairment sets in, and yes, your emotions may get the best of you. This is also when people get sick, sow the seeds of tomorrow's hangover, and make decisions they may later regret.

Inexperienced drinkers may subscribe to the “more is better” philosophy, but this ignores alcohol's two distinct phases. If you choose to drink, the trick is to keep your BAC at or below .05 to get the positive effects while avoiding the undesirable “drunk phase.” Curious about what a BAC of .05 looks like for you? Visit www.arizona.edu/students/echug.php or click on the code to the right for instant feedback.



wildfact

Safe Ride offers free rides to students near campus (call 621-SAFE), but cannot provide service to students who are intoxicated.



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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