

# the **RED CUP** Q&A



**separating alcohol fact from fiction**  
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## **Q** How does eating food help when you drink?

**A.** Anyone who has had a few drinks on an empty stomach will tell you that eating before imbibing can make all the difference. Drinking on empty allows alcohol to get in your bloodstream faster than if you ate, resulting in higher blood alcohol concentrations (BACs). And those elevated BACs don't come without a price: blackouts, regrets, throwing up, hangovers, embarrassment, legal issues, and drama are just a few of the associated costs. In other words, more BAC, more problems.

Having a high BAC also makes it all too easy to keep on drinking. Judgment and decision-making skills erode, as do our senses of taste and smell – all key ways that we regulate how much, how fast and what we choose to drink. “Beer leads to more beer” is one way a recent movie described this effect.\*

So how does food help? It's easy to imagine that late night burrito “soaking” up the alcohol in your stomach like a sponge, but that's not exactly what happens. When you eat, your stomach holds on to food in order to digest it. Any accompanying alcohol will also tend to stay in your stomach for a longer period of time, thereby slowing its passage into the small intestine and into the bloodstream. Take away that burrito, sandwich or that slice of pizza and the alcohol moves quickly through the stomach, small intestine and into the bloodstream.

Keep in mind that while food helps, it isn't a “magic drink eraser.” Food slows the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream – it doesn't cancel out those shots or neutralize their effects. If you want to enjoy more of the social benefits of alcohol, use your mind (and mind your elbow). Regulate your drinks by going into the night with a plan, setting a drink limit, and stopping when you get there.

\* Be the first to identify the movie this quote is from on the Campus Health Facebook page and win a one-of-a-kind Red Cup Q&A gel pen and refrigerator magnet!



**wildfact**

**If you think someone is experiencing alcohol poisoning, call 911, stay with them, and lay them on their side in the recovery position. Never give someone in this state anything to eat or drink since it's a choking hazard.**



**Got a question about alcohol?**

Email it to [redcup@email.arizona.edu](mailto:redcup@email.arizona.edu)



[www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu)

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