

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Why is sex better after you have been drinking?

A. Like many things in life... it's complicated. Alcohol interacts with our brain chemistry, body functions, and behaviors in ways that researchers continue to study. Read on for three reasons you might enjoy sex more after drinking:

- 1. Decreased inhibitions** - For many people, alcohol serves as a "social lubricant," making it easier to talk, dance, or hook up with a potential sexual partner – whether you are a shy, introverted guy or a gregarious partier. Always, *always* be clear that you have consent from your intimate partner prior to any sexual act.
- 2. Expectations** - Our "mindset" often has more of an influence on our moods and behavior than the consumption of alcohol. Research has shown that if you expect alcohol to make you feel better... guess what? It may make you feel better—at least when you begin drinking and your blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is in the low to moderate range (< .05 BAC). Heavy alcohol consumption often cancels out any benefits of a positive mindset.
- 3. Increased serotonin levels** - Serotonin is a neurotransmitter associated with sleep, appetite, and pleasure (among other sensory behaviors). High serotonin levels can make a person feel good. Alcohol consumption can temporarily increase serotonin levels. When you have sex "under the influence" your brain may perceive it as more pleasurable than sober sex. Brain chemistry is very complex and alcohol is just one of many factors that can raise serotonin activity. Exercise, sleep, and certain foods can also increase serotonin levels and feelings of pleasure. Alcohol and serotonin have a convoluted relationship. While a small increase in serotonin levels is good for some people, too much of an increase can be bad for others.

Word to the wise: Too much alcohol may negatively affect your sex life. Heavy drinking can decrease testosterone production and impair erections in men, and decrease orgasmic response in women. Shakespeare wrote centuries ago in *Macbeth*, "Drink provokes the desire, but takes away the performance." We warned you that it was complicated.



wildfact

Free movie tonight at Gallagher Theater:
"Let's Talk about Sex" from 6-7:30pm.



Got a question
about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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