

# the RED CUP

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction  
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## Q Is alcohol a food and, if not, why do I gain weight?

**A.** We couldn't find alcohol on the Nutrition Pyramid or the new Food Plate guide because alcohol isn't exactly a food as it doesn't require digestion, but instead, is absorbed into our system.

Alcohol supplies calories but few nutrients in our diet. In addition to the calories, alcohol interferes with fat burning – important if you don't want to gain weight. Normally, the liver metabolizes fats, but when a person drinks, alcohol takes preference. The liver breaks down alcohol for energy first, causing a build-up of fatty acids. What this means is that the body uses the calories from alcohol before it is able to burn the calories from fat. Alcohol can also stimulate your appetite (think junk food cravings).

It's easy to forget that you can drink as many calories as you eat. Besides adding empty calories, your alcohol intake may contribute to other nutritional concerns:

- Excessive drinking can lead to vitamin deficiencies. This is common among problem drinkers, but they can also be found in people who consume alcohol on a regular basis.
  - 1) **Vitamin B:** alcohol interferes with the absorption of vitamins B-1, B-6, B-12
  - 2) **Folate:** helps produce and maintain new cells. Alcohol interferes with intake and absorption
  - 3) **Vitamin A:** alcohol can lead to an A deficiency
  - 4) **Calcium:** drinking can cause a loss in the body by increasing urinary calcium excretion.
- Drinking causes frequent urination, thereby excreting the important minerals potassium, zinc, calcium, and magnesium.

When you consume more calories than your body needs, you will gain weight. And don't forget your mixer, which is likely loaded with sugar!

### Drink Guidelines:

- never more than 3 drinks per day for women or 4 for men
- no more than 7 drinks per week for women or 14 for men



wildfact

UA Food Day Fair: join us on the mall tomorrow, Oct. 24th, from 10-2 for free food, food demos, live music & exhibits.



Got a question about alcohol?

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



CAMPUS HEALTH SERVICE

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

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