

the

RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Why do people get the spins and how can you make it stop?

A. The “why” and “how” are frequently asked questions and while you can find many causation theories out there, there is no evidence beyond good guesses as to why drinkers get the spins. For those readers who’ve never experienced this, it’s best described as feeling as if the room is spinning uncontrollably, leading to feeling nauseous and likely followed by vomiting. Think of it as an extreme hangover symptom. People who have experienced the spins have nothing good to say about it.

Drinking too much can lead to room spins but researchers are not 100% sure how the process works. A common theory (simplified here) involves tiny, tiny hairs in the swollen inner ear that send an electric signal to nerves – which in turn signal the brain, creating a sense of motion. You experience it as a spinning sensation. Another theory is that tiny eye muscles convulse with excessive alcohol use, leading to an equilibrium imbalance.

The other part of the answer is that there is no “cure” or way to make it stop once the spinning starts, as time is the only answer to getting back from this abyss. In other words, waiting for your high Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) to lower will get the spins to stop. Some sufferers have offered suggestions that help them but there’s no evidence to support they work. The Red Cup Q&A offers them in the event it helps you feel a bit better: drink water, sit down, or lie down with at least one foot on the floor to ground yourself, and don’t look at the moving ceiling fan! And stop drinking (actually, you’ll be too sick to accept further drink offers).

Anecdotal evidence from drinker self-reports indicates they experience spins when they drink too much or more than usual. It’s your body’s way of saying “enough.” Prevention is definitely the way to go on this one.



wildcat

The average number of drinks UA students usually have when they party is 4. (2012 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,406)



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, LISAC, 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.