

the **RED CUP**

Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Is it possible to take 21 shots?

A. Taking 21 shots of hard alcohol, measured as 1.5 ounces of 80 proof liquor (40% ethanol), is likely impossible. Anyone who tries would probably pass out before they reach 21 shots.

For most drinkers, 2-4 drinks per hour will increase blood alcohol concentration (BAC) to over the .08 limit. For example, a 180 pound male drinking 21 shots over a four-hour period means he will have a BAC that is 5 times the legal .08 limit (and dangerously high). The biggest concern about attempting to consume 21 shots is when someone's BAC becomes extremely high, between .30 and .40. At those BAC levels, the drinker may experience vomiting, blacking out, passing out, and alcohol poisoning that can lead to death.

Let's examine why someone would want to take 21 shots. If you and your friends have turned 21, you have probably heard of celebrating by drinking 21 shots (sometimes referred to as a "power hour"). Power hours are risky because the birthday guy or girl consumes many shots very quickly. Drinking that fast means they can expect vomiting, blacking out, respiratory arrest, or an alcohol-induced coma. Most people don't look forward to experiencing those things on their birthday.

Turning 21 is a huge milestone and deserves to be celebrated! Here are some tips to stay safe if you choose to celebrate with alcohol:

- Have a sober friend to make sure you get home safely.
- Set a limit on how many drinks you will have and stop when you reach it.
- Find creative ways to say "no thanks" to friends that offer you shots. Check out the CHTV episode on how to pass up drinks and keep your street cred at www.youtube.com/uacampushealth.

Not everyone gets drunk on their 21st birthday, even if it seems like it. Students often overestimate how much their peers are drinking, meaning that perceptions are not the reality. It's your birthday, so celebrate your way and remember to stay safe.

Guest author: *Melanie Fleck, MPH, Campus Health Service*



wildfact

89% of UA students refuse to ride with a driver who has been drinking.
(2012 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,406)



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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