

# the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction  
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## Q If a mosquito bites you when you're drunk, will the mosquito get drunk too?

**A.** This reminds us of a joke. Two mosquitoes were buzzin' around when they saw a drunken man. One says to the other, "You bite him. I'm driving."

But, no, skeeters don't get inebriated biting drunk people.

Not surprisingly, there are no specific studies on this phenomenon. But scientists, utilizing devices called inebriometers that puff ethanol vapors at insects and measure their sensitivity, have documented lab studies in which honeybees flew upside down and fruit flies performed poorly on learning tests when inebriated. (Don't you wonder just what were those fruit flies trying to learn?)

According to entomologist Coby Schal of North Carolina State University, bugs demonstrate a pretty high tolerance and are able to withstand vapor concentrations of 60% alcohol.

"Someone who's had 10 drinks might have a blood alcohol content of 0.2 percent. To a mosquito, a blood meal that contains 0.2 percent alcohol is like drinking a beer diluted 25-fold."

Additionally, for mosquitoes, alcohol (and any fluid other than blood) is diverted to a "holding pouch," where enzymes break it down before it hits their nervous system.

However, it's scientifically proven that people consuming alcohol are more likely to be bitten by mosquitoes than those who are not drinking. Skeeters are attracted to certain smells, and those lady mosquitoes (yes, only females bite) tend to go for "bar flies."

BTW, to amp up the "yuck" factor, mosquitoes don't bite you for food since they feed off of plant nectar. Females suck your blood to get a protein needed to develop their eggs. Sounds like a creepy micro-combination of the *Alien* and *Twilight* movies. It turns out we are just a parasitic part of the circle of life for mosquitoes, especially when we're drinking.



wildfact

National Depression Screening Day:  
Oct. 10th, 10am-2pm on the UA Mall



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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