

the **RED CUP** Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

Most UA students drink less. Of all the alcohol consumed by UA students, 79% of students drink only 26% of the alcohol. (2015 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,705)

Is it a good idea to save calories (not eat) before going out to drink beer?

Rationing what you eat – or avoiding food altogether – may seem like a good idea based on the calories you are planning to drink in the form of alcohol. Beer, wine, and liquor have plenty of empty calories that you may be eager to offset by abstaining from food prior to a night out. The problem is, not only does this form of “**saving calories**” not work most of the time, it **will very likely cost you many more calories in the long run.**

The reason? Drinking on an empty stomach increases the rate at which alcohol is absorbed into the bloodstream, and results in higher blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels. When people become intoxicated, alcohol (especially hard liquor) can become easier to drink, since judgment and self-control, as well as sensory functions such as smell and taste, become impaired. Hungry drinkers also tend to make different types of decisions about food as evidenced by the kinds of late-night fare they crave: think pizza, burritos,

burgers, and Sonoran hot dogs. As a result, drinking more high-calorie alcohol and eating fattier foods is often the cost of skipping out on that meal earlier in the day.

If you are conscious about calories, **consider eating a meal and moderating your alcohol intake from the get-go.** This can still offer you many of the social benefits that people tend to associate with alcohol, but without the extra calories. In fact, moderating your alcohol intake will not only cost you fewer calories, but will likely offer other benefits (e.g. better decisions, fewer regrets, less money spent, a more enjoyable night out) as well.

The pattern of skipping meals to get drunk faster or to avoid calories has been referred to by the media as “drunkorexia.” While not a clinical diagnosis, these habits can pose reasons for concern. For more info on nutrition services or to speak with a counselor at the UA Campus Health Service, call (520) 621-9202.

Got a question about alcohol? Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu



**CAMPUS
HEALTH**

The Red Cup Q&A is written by Lynn Reyes, LCSW, LISAC, David Salafsky, MPH, Lee Ann Hamilton, MA, CHES, Spencer Gorin, RN, and Christiana Clauson, MPH, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.