

the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

86% of UA students party one night per week or less.
(2015 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,705)

Is “breaking the seal” a real thing?

You’ve heard this one before, right? You’re out with friends. After a beer or two, someone gets up and announces they are heading to the bathroom. What’s the phrase most likely to be thrown out? “Breaking the seal” is so overused, many of us believe it’s a real thing. It’s the idea that once you urinate that first time after drinking, you’ll have to “go” more often once the “seal” is broken.

But the truth is, “breaking the seal” just doesn’t hold water (or anything else). There’s simply no physiological basis for it.

That being said, there’s no denying alcohol’s diuretic properties, which stimulate the kidneys and lead to frequent urination. Alcohol decreases the secretion of vasopressin, a hormone which helps retain water in the body. Less vasopressin means that water is more likely to be flushed out through your bladder.

If you drink, you’ll wind up releasing more water than you put in. And if

you overdo it, you can thank those very qualities the next day when you’re feeling dehydrated and hungover.

The good news is that by staying in your “sweet spot” – generally a BAC of .05 or under – and drinking plenty of water, you can avoid dehydration, headaches, nausea, and other hangover symptoms. Savvy drinkers make drink spacers (anything non-alcoholic, but water is best) part of their routine to keep hydrated and stay in the sweet spot longer. By alternating with spacers after every beer, mixed drink or shot, you’ll find that you enjoy a social buzz longer, too.

While “breaking the seal” isn’t real, that’s not reason enough to stop saying it when you are out with friends. Next time you head to the bathroom ask someone to grab you a water while you’re away. Better to break the seal than to break a perfectly good buzz.

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



www.health.arizona.edu



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