

# the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

## wildfact

42% of UA students have not consumed alcohol within the past 30 days. (2015 Health & Wellness Survey, n=2,705)

## Why do students feel pressured to drink at a party?

Okay, stop me if you've heard this one. A reporter was interviewing a 104 year-old woman: "And what do you think is the best thing about being 104?" the reporter asked. She simply replied, "No peer pressure."

The desire to belong and conform to one's peer group is very powerful and does not stop after high school. In college, when students experience a time of transition and social freedom, peers continue to play a strong role. Peer pressure is frequently cited as a cause for excessive drinking among college students. It comes as no surprise that students entering college show marked increases in alcohol and drug use compared to those who continue to live at home or get jobs following graduation from high school.

Regarding alcohol, research describes peer pressure as a combination of three distinct influences: overt offer of alcohol, modeling, and social norms.

**Overt offers** of alcohol range from polite gestures to intense goading or commands to drink, like during drinking games. **Modeling** occurs from direct imitation of another

student's concurrent drinking behavior.

**Perceived social norms** serve to make excessive drinking appear common to student expectations. Many view college as a place to drink excessively, in a time-limited fashion, before assuming responsibilities of adulthood. Combining all this with easily accessible alcohol-based social opportunities can make navigating around peer pressure challenging.

However, there is good news about being a college student embracing adulthood. You have arrived at an age, time, and place where you can demonstrate greater ego strength as you try on new identities and behaviors safely. You can differentiate yourself from others and not get wasted in order to party or have fun. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals who party in moderation and create your own positive peer pressure circle of friends.

Okay, stop me if you've heard this one before. A reporter was interviewing a 19 year-old woman: "And what do you think is the best thing about being a self-assured 19?" the reporter asked. She simply replied, "No beer pressure."

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)



**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.