

sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid 98% of UA students prefer to be with someone who drinks moderately or not at all. (2007 Health & Wellness Survey, n= 2162)

Q. Is it true that when a guy drinks it is harder for him to get it up?

A. While alcohol is often portrayed as a great enabler of sexual situations (think TV and magazine ads), the truth is not always so rosy. In general, the more alcohol you consume the more difficult it is to have and maintain an erection. This happens because ethanol (alcohol) both restricts the flow of blood to the penis and can affect the amount of testosterone that your body produces.

Alcohol can make you feel relaxed, confident and more outgoing – but usually these desirable effects only occur after the first few drinks. After more than a few, your potential partner may find you less appealing – making you less able (and less likely) to perform.

As with all drugs, dosage is key. Many inexperienced drinkers mistakenly believe that if you feel good after two drinks, you'll feel twice as good after four and three times as good after six. That kind of math just doesn't add up since alcohol is a biphasic (two-phase) drug. The first phase includes the social qualities that people tend to like, leaving you feeling "up." The more you drink, however, the more the depressant "downer" qualities of the second phase set in, leaving you feeling sluggish, sloppy and in a word, drunk.

According to a study from the Harvard School of Public Health, heavier drinking college students are more likely to engage in unplanned and unprotected sex and much more likely to do something they later regretted compared to peers who drink more moderately.

But what exactly is moderate drinking? Typically, this is described as no more than two standard drinks (12 oz. beer, 5 oz. wine, or 1.5 oz. of hard liquor) per hour for men or one drink per hour for women – but even this may be too much for some individuals. The best way to moderate your drinking is to plan ahead: set a limit on the drinks you'll have, know their alcohol content and stop once you get there.

For personalized feedback on your alcohol use check out www.arizona.edu/students/echug.php

Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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