

# the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction  
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

## Q How much alcohol will kill your liver?

**A.** Moderate use of alcohol doesn't do tremendous damage to the liver. However, the overuse and abuse of alcohol can have devastating effects to the liver and to the rest of the body. Using other liver damaging medications, including acetaminophen, can speed up this process.

Drinkers can develop alcoholic hepatitis, a condition that causes the liver to become painfully enlarged. According to the Mayo Clinic, symptoms of alcoholic hepatitis include:

- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain, tenderness, swelling
- Nausea and vomiting
- Paleness or yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes
- Fever
- Dry mouth
- Unexpected, rapid weight gain

If the person continues to drink and if the alcoholic hepatitis goes untreated, it can progress into cirrhosis of the liver. This happens when fat deposits in the liver block the liver cells from their blood supply, depriving them of oxygen and other nutrients, eventually killing them. When the cells die from lack of blood, they are replaced with scar tissue, which can't perform liver functions. With mild cirrhosis, your liver can repair itself and continue to do its job. But with advanced cirrhosis, more scar tissue forms in the liver, making it impossible to function adequately. Some drinkers develop symptoms of cirrhosis after just a few years of consuming 3 to 4 drinks a day, while heavier drinkers never suffer from liver disease.

The following factors may increase the chances of developing liver damage:

- Females (2-3 times more often than males)
- Genetic predisposition
- Poor nutrition
- Having other diseases like diabetes

Talk to your health care provider if you have any questions about your liver. A simple lab test of your blood can evaluate your liver function.



**wildfact**

**87.5% of UA students have not passed out from drinking in the past 30 days.**

(Health & Wellness Survey, N=2,479)



**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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