

the RED CUP Q&A



separating alcohol fact from fiction
EVERY TUESDAY IN THE DAILY WILDCAT

Q Why do people wake up still drunk sometimes?

A. If your Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) climbs to high levels, chances are you will still have alcohol in your bloodstream after you wake up the next day. The liver eliminates alcohol from the bloodstream, but it doesn't work as fast as we might like.

Example A: if a 120 pound woman has 7 standard drinks (that's six 1.5 oz. shots of 80 proof vodka) while partying on Saturday until midnight, her BAC will peak at 0.26. That's more than 3 times the legal DUI limit of 0.08 BAC and high enough to cause her to blackout. If she goes to bed at 2am and sleeps 8 hours, she will wake up at 10am Sunday morning with a BAC of about .10. She will still be drunk and over the legal DUI limit. Based on the amount of alcohol she drank, her weight, and her gender, it will take about 17 hours for her BAC to return to zero. She won't be sober until 5pm on Sunday afternoon.

Had she limited her drinking to 3 shots of vodka, it would take seven hours to return to zero BAC and she would wake up at 10am feeling much better, without any alcohol in her bloodstream. Most people who drink moderately (one drink an hour for women, or 2 drinks an hour for men) rarely wake up impaired or hung over.

Example B: if a 160 pound man has 7 standard drinks (7 cans of Keystone Light beer on Saturday night), his BAC will peak at 0.16 (more than double the legal DUI limit of 0.08 BAC). If he stops drinking at midnight, gets a ride from a designated driver, goes to bed at 2am and sleeps 8 hours, he will wake at 10am Sunday morning with a BAC of about .01. Not quite zero, but almost. When it comes to recovering from drinking, most men have advantages over women: men typically weigh more and metabolize alcohol at a faster rate.



wildfact

Drinking a glass of water in between each alcoholic drink is a good way to prevent hangovers and moderate overall alcohol consumption.



Got a question about alcohol?

Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu

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