

Alcohol: Myths + Truths

Think you know everything about alcohol? Here are some common myths debunked.

MYTH: Everyone drinks.

TRUTH: Not true. Although 31% of teens said they've drunk alcohol in the past month that still leaves 69% who did not! If you choose not to drink, you're definitely not alone.

MYTH: Alcohol gives you energy.

TRUTH: This statement is false. Alcohol is a depressant, and can actually make you sleepy. It slows down your motor skills which control the way you think, speak, move and react.

MYTH: Beer before liquor, never been sicker - liquor before beer, you're in the clear.

TRUTH: This is an old urban legend used to explain why people get sick when they drink - but it's just not true. Your blood alcohol content (also known as BAC, the percentage of alcohol in your blood) is what determines how drunk you are. It doesn't matter what type of alcohol you chose to consume - a drink is a drink, and too much of any combination can make you sick.

MYTH: I can sober up quickly if I need to.

TRUTH: If you think that taking a shower, drinking 10 cups of coffee or eating a loaf of bread will help you sober up - think again. The only thing your body needs is time — depending on your weight, it takes about three hours to eliminate every two drink you've had that night.

MYTH: Driving with someone who drank can be safe, because they drive extra carefully so they don't get pulled over.

TRUTH: YIKES! Drinking and driving is extremely dangerous. Each year, approximately 5,000 young people under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking and about 1,900 of these deaths are from motor vehicle crashes(NIAAA). In 2002, alcohol was involved in 41% of all fatal crashes (NIDA). A person might think he's in control, but alcohol slows down reaction time which makes driving a car one of the worst decisions one can make — even if he's had only a little bit to drink.

MYTH: Everyone who gets drunk acts the same.

TRUTH: Nope. There are lots of factors that affect the body's reactions to alcohol, including weight, age, gender, body chemistry, genetics, amount of food and alcohol consumed — the list can go on. The way one person reacts can be vastly different from how another person reacts. You can't predict how alcohol will affect you.

MYTH: Alcohol makes sex better.

TRUTH: Wrong again. Alcohol can make people feel less uncomfortable in a social situation. But the reality is that alcohol can actually keep guys from getting or keeping an erection, and it can lower girls' sex drives, too. More importantly, alcohol can affect your decision-making ability: You might put yourself in a risky situation; you might think you're ready to have sex when you're not or you might forget to use a condom — which can result in pregnancy and/or contracting a sexually transmitted disease.

MYTH: If I drink too much, the worst thing that can happen is I get my stomach pumped.

TRUTH: No way. If alcohol is drunk excessively, it can lead to alcohol poisoning which can cause death. Also, drinking excessive alcohol can cause vomiting. When drunk and unconscious, a person may inhale fluids that have been vomited, resulting in death by asphyxiation. Long-term, heavy use of alcohol can lead to addiction (alcoholism), and can even cause a heart attack or stroke.

MYTH: Talk to me about drugs - that's a bigger issue than alcohol.

TRUTH: Both drugs and alcohol are serious problems among teens. Alcohol kills young people just like cocaine, heroin and other serious illegal drugs. Also, according to recent studies, nearly one-half (47%) of persons who began drinking before age 14 were alcohol dependent at some point in their lifetime.

MYTH: Alcohol isn't harmful to my body.

TRUTH: Again, this statement is wrong. Large amounts of alcohol can take its toll on your body, causing disturbed sleep, nausea, and vomiting as well as a dreaded hangover. Heavy drinking can inhibit the firing of nerve cells that control breathing, a condition known as respiratory depression — a condition that can be fatal.

MYTH: My friends will think I'm weird if I don't drink.

TRUTH: Friends are your friends no matter what - and they won't give up your friendship over something as silly as a beer. Also, keep in mind that most people are usually too focused on themselves to care what others are — or aren't — doing.

MYTH: My parents drink - so what's the big deal if I do?

TRUTH: Actually, it's scientifically proven to be a big deal. According to new research by [A. Thomas McLellan, Ph.D.](#), teens who drink and take drugs may be at greater risk than previously thought. His research suggests that the brain is not fully formed until age 24. Using drugs and alcohol during this important time as your brain develops might have negative long-term effects on brain functions such as memory.

Sources: NIAAA, NESARC and www.thecoolspot.gov