

the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

The four factors affecting BAC are body weight, biological sex, amount of alcohol consumed, and time over which consumption takes place.

Can men outdrink women?

There are plenty of perfectly good ways to get competitive out there, but drinking contests might not be the best option, unless you are OK with a case of the Brown Bottle Flu the following day. Yes, anyone who disregards the consequences can choose to drink more than the “other guy” (or girl). But the fact remains that when it comes to the sexes, alcohol does not provide a level playing field.

Many people think guys can outdrink women solely because they tend to weigh more. And while it's true that heavier people will have lower blood alcohol concentrations (BACs) compared to lighter people drinking the same amount of alcohol – that's only part of the story. Compared to women, men also have more of the enzymes that metabolize alcohol. More enzymes mean a lower BAC for the same amount of alcohol consumed.

There's another important difference as well: men have

a higher percentage of water (by virtue of more muscle mass) compared to women, which helps dilute the concentration of alcohol in their bloodstream.

So, can men outdrink women? If you're asking who can drink more and have a lower BAC, all other things being equal, the answer is yes. But if you are looking for a good time, who really cares? Most of the positive effects of alcohol happen after the first few drinks, not the last few. Look on the bright side: women and people who weigh less need fewer drinks to get the positive social/fun effects of alcohol. In other words, they can drink less and still have a good time.

Let's face it – anyone can overdrink, but underdrinking requires skill, practice, and discipline. Do you have what it takes? For more info on your BAC, and to figure out how many drinks will keep you in the sweet spot, check out www.health.arizona.edu/echeckup

Got a question about alcohol? Email it to redcup@email.arizona.edu



www.health.arizona.edu



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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 Castillo, MPH, in the Health Promotion and Preventive Services (HPPS) department of the UA Campus Health Service.