

# the **RED CUP** Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

wildfact

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## Does having food in your stomach help? If so, which foods?

Anyone who drinks on an empty stomach will tell you that they felt the effects of alcohol MUCH faster than when drinking on a full stomach.

Having food in your stomach slows down the rate at which alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream. While it's easy to imagine that late night burrito "soaking" up the alcohol like a sponge, that's not exactly what happens. When you eat, your stomach holds on to food in order to digest it. Enzymes break up proteins into amino acids, fats into fatty acids and cholesterol, and carbohydrates into smaller molecules of glucose.

Without that burrito to keep your stomach busy, alcohol zooms through your stomach, quickly making its way to your small intestines. About 80% of the alcohol you drink is absorbed in your small intestine (and about 20% in your stomach).

Complex carbs, fats, and protein take longer to digest, so eating foods like cheese, meat, nuts, seeds or whole

grains will help to slow down the rate at which you absorb alcohol. Eventually, your BAC will rise, but starting with healthy food in your stomach will help slow down the effects of alcohol. If you eat simpler carbs (cookies, white bread, noodles, etc.) your stomach will digest them quickly and become empty again.

FOOD	DIGESTION TIME
Fruits	30-60 minutes
Veggies, beans, grains	1-2 hours
Nuts, seeds, avocados	2-3 hours
Cooked meats and fish	3-4 hours

While eating healthy food can help, it isn't a magic "drink eraser" and won't cancel out the effects of too much alcohol (the real culprit in high BACs). If you want to enjoy a fun night out, start with a plan, set a limit, and stick to it. Two standard drinks/hour for men and one standard drink/hour for women (or less) will help make it a night to remember.

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)



**CAMPUS  
HEALTH**

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