

# the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

## wildfact

91% of UA students reported no use of unprescribed Attention Deficit Disorder medications in the past school year. (2016 Health & Wellness Survey, n=3,113)

## What are the effects of drinking and using Adderall?

Adderall is a controlled substance and prescription stimulant medication typically used to treat Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It helps people with ADHD focus and maintain attention to work and study more effectively. Adderall, Vyvanse, Ritalin (methylphenidate), and all other prescribed ADHD medications are legally classified as Schedule II drugs because, although they have been approved for medical use, they have a high potential for abuse and misuse.

Current research on interaction effects of alcohol and these stimulants are limited but clear on one point: when mixing alcohol with commonly prescribed doses of methylphenidate, our body naturally converts this drug combination into a new substance (i.e., a psychoactive metabolite) called ethylphenidate. While the effects of low doses of ethylphenidate are currently unknown, high doses of alcohol and ethylphenidate are reported to be

toxic. Further, this drug combination reduces one's perception of drunkenness while increasing stimulant euphoria. This distortion in thinking and emotion makes users more prone to make unsafe decisions while under the influence.

Although Adderall and other Schedule II stimulants are considered safe for medical use, no drugs are entirely free of side effects. Talk with your doctor if you are taking a prescribed ADHD medication and are considering using alcohol.

Side effects of improper use of stimulants such as Adderall can include irritability, restlessness, increased heart rate, headache, aggression, insomnia, and seizures; overdoses can be fatal. The Food and Drug Administration gave all ADHD stimulant medications a "black box" warning (their strongest warning) because of their potential for abuse, dependence, serious heart problems, and death. Mixing these stimulants with alcohol can be risky.

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**

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.