

# the RED CUP Q&A

separating alcohol fact from fiction

## wildfact

“The spins” (sometimes experienced after consuming alcohol) are caused by small convulsions in the eye muscles. Lying down usually makes it worse.

## Why can't I see as well when drinking?

When alcohol is absorbed in your bloodstream, it causes sedative effects to your brain. This can result in impairment to your vision, as well as your other senses- taste, hearing, touch, and smell. Here are a few different ways that alcohol can impair your vision.

The eye has two sets of muscles that regulate vision: one set controls the amount of light that's allowed into the eye and the other set controls our ability to focus on objects far away and close up. When alcohol, or other drugs, are in the bloodstream, the small muscles of the eye are unable to function and focusing becomes slower and less effective. Eventually, the eye muscles lose their ability to work in coordination with each other and they begin to focus

independently causing blurred or double vision. Small amounts of alcohol can also impair your eyes' ability to respond to changing light conditions causing a longer glare recovery time, which is dangerous when driving.

Field Sobriety Tests may be used to test the impairment of eye muscles by testing for Horizontal Gaze Nystagmus, an involuntary twitch of one's eye muscles. A driver suspected of driving under the influence may be asked to follow a light with their eyes without moving their heads. As the eye follows the light, right or left, and a jerkiness in eye movement is detected, that person is said to be under the influence of alcohol (or another drug).

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)



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