

Your Body on Alcohol

From the Stone Age to modern day, alcohol has played a major role in religion, ceremony, celebration and health. Whatever your “spirit” of choice, here are some nutrition consequences to the body and the brain when overindulging.

- **Weight gain:** Alcohol calories are concentrated and “empty,” offering little to zero nutritional value and range from 70 to 160 per serving. In addition, your liver has to divert from efficient energy processing to detox the alcohol in your system, storing more calories as fat. Alcohol is metabolized as a fat and the calories are mostly stored in the belly area.
- **Digestion:** Simply put, alcohol irritates your digestive system by making your stomach produce more acid than usual. This can cause gastritis (inflammation of the stomach lining) and triggers stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhea and, in severe cases, even bleeding.
- **Hydration:** Taking several trips to the bathroom while drinking? This is evidence that alcohol is a powerful diuretic that can cause dehydration, and can take several days from which to recover. If you’re drinking in the sun, take extra precautions and have

food and water on hand to avoid dangerous health consequences like brain injury and even death.

- **Brain Function:** Alcohol interferes with the brain’s communication pathways and can cause changes in behavior, coordination and cognition. For these reasons, it can impact athletic and academic performance, for up to 48 hours. It also affects appetite, first as a suppressant while drinking, and later as a stimulant that often leads to poor food choices like greasy fast foods and late night burritos.

As a reminder, here are some alcohol basics:

- A “standard” serving of alcohol is a 12 ounce beer (5% alcohol content), 8-9 ounces of malt liquor (about 7% alcohol), 5 ounces of wine (about 12% alcohol), and 1.5 ounces of distilled liquor (i.e., vodka, tequila, etc. with 40% alcohol)
- Moderate drinking means one drink a day for women and up to two drinks a day for men
- Binge drinking is defined as 5 or more alcoholic drinks for males or 4 or more for females on the same occasion within a few hours of each other



CAMPUS HEALTH

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Food and nutrition services (including healthy eating, cooking skills, weight management, digestive problems, hormonal and cardiovascular diseases, and eating disorders) are offered year-round at Campus Health. Call (520) 621-6483 to make an appointment.