

■ Parting Shots

Probably the best way to minimize the risk of problems happening to you is to simply be responsible about drinking—by being aware that alcohol is a powerful drug and then treating it like one.

That means taking care if you're going to be taking a drink—whether taking care takes the form of taking a cab when you're out on the town or simply taking it easy when a friend tries to insist on another round when you've had enough.

It also could mean passing on drinking altogether for some of us, particularly pregnant women and those taking prescribed medications, which can produce deadly interactions when taken with alcohol.

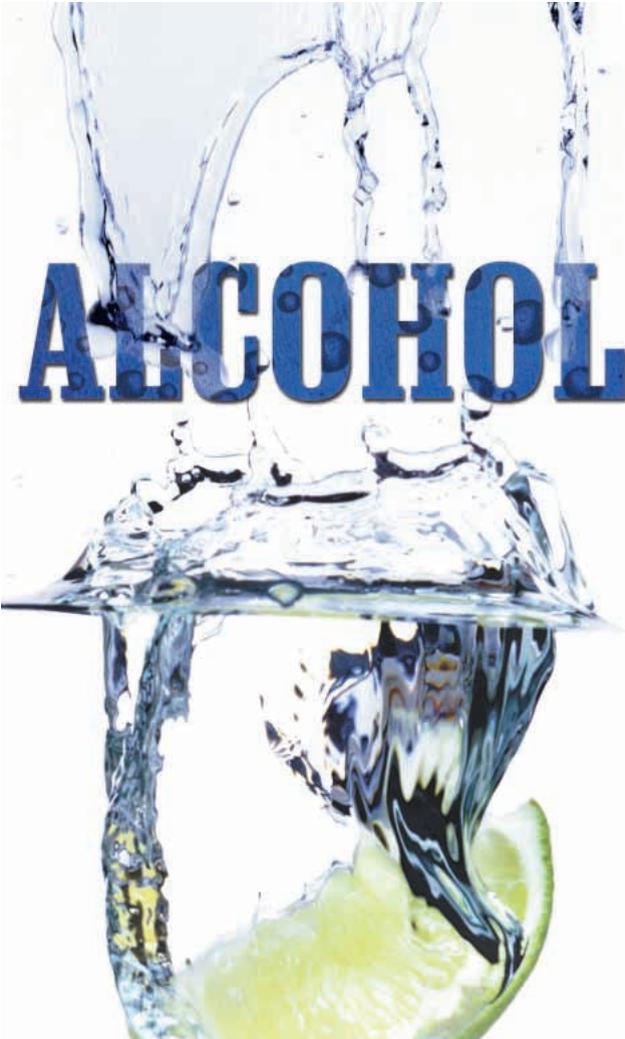
It can mean a lot of things, because there are a lot of things we can do to take the danger out of drinking. But they all start with each of us. And they all end with being responsible.

Here's looking at *you*, kid. ■



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ALCOHOL

HOW DRINKING AFFECTS HEALTH & NUTRITION

A D.I.N. PUBLICATION BY CHRISTINA DYE

■ This One's For You

You're an "average" drinker. Maybe you like to chill out with a cocktail after a hard day at work. And maybe you enjoy a glass of wine with dinner or a beer or two during the game of the week.

You don't depend on drinking to relax or to get through the day, and alcohol's never caused, or contributed to, any problems for you, at least not any *real* problems.

Basically, you can take booze or leave it, and drinking doesn't seem that big a deal.

Cool!

This pamphlet's for you, the "average," not-necessarily-problem one who's curious about the effects of moderate drinking.

Of course, alcoholism *is* a long-term risk associated with drinking.

And there are plenty of "average"



Cheers! Sex is often used to spice up alcohol advertising. But the reality for many drinkers is a lot different than the image.

people who started out drinking moderately and ended up staying at the party too long.

In fact, according to a recent estimate by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 17.6 million Americans are problem drinkers.

Any one of *them* should be able to tell you that problem drinking can be a real problem, indeed.

But it's not the only problem tied to drinking, not by a long shot.

That's because alcohol is a complicated chemical that produces a tangle of health effects (and problems), and you don't have to drink *too much* to have them show up in your life.

In fact, maybe no more than you already drink.



You can always drink **too much**, whether you're drinking shots or piña coladas with little umbrellas on the side.



■ The Law of Averages

So how much alcohol is *too much*? Well, that depends on who you are and how you define "too much."

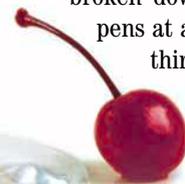
Statistically, Americans drank an average of 2.31 gallons of ethyl alcohol per person in 2007. That's equal to about 50 gallons of beer, 20 gallons of wine, or five gallons of liquor.

That's a lot no matter who's counting—and who's pouring.

Still, whether or not your particular slice of that consumption is too much can depend on a lot of factors, including social setting (*Dinner with your boss or bowling with the boys?*), individual habits (*Are you used to drinking a little, a lot, or at all?*), and even time of day (*A 7 o'clock martini attracts different types of attention, depending on whether it takes place at 7 o'clock in the morning or evening*).

One thing about drinking that doesn't change is the rate at which alcohol is *metabolized*, or broken down in the body. That happens at a consistent rate of about a third of an ounce per hour.

That means that, no matter how much or how often you drink, if you drink more than that for longer than that you're going to feel the toxic effects of alcohol.



And *that* means that no matter how much hot coffee you pour into yourself (or cold showers you pour *onto* yourself), nothing will alter that rate.

Another constant is the alcohol content in different drinks. That means that a 12-ounce bottle of beer contains about the same total amount of alcohol as a shot of 86-proof whiskey or a six-ounce glass of wine.

That's why you can *always* drink too much, whether you're drinking beer, shots of tequila, or piña colodas with little umbrellas on the side.

And while most people probably think that distilled liquors—like bourbon or gin or vodka—are riskier, health-wise, all types of alcohol produce similar wear and tear on the body if you drink enough.

What kinds of wear and tear? Just check the box below for some of the more common forms.

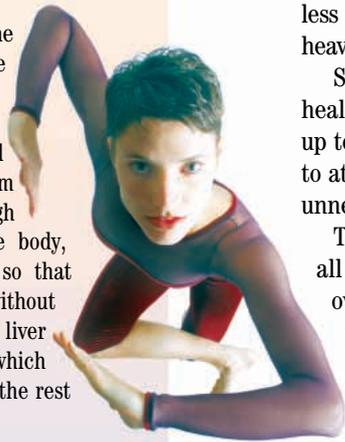
■ Body Talk

There's a lot going on whenever alcohol's going through the body, so we'll limit ourselves here to the main systems only:

► **Liver.** Since alcohol is toxic, clearing it out of the system is a priority. And when the liver gets busy getting rid of alcohol, it gets behind in other functions, like maintaining stable blood-sugar levels to the brain. It takes a pounding in the process, too. Cirrhosis is a common result of long-term drinking, and a main killer of older drinkers.

► **Stomach.** Alcohol irritates the stomach lining, which can cause vomiting. Heavy drinking can lead to ulcers and other problems.

► **Central Nervous System.** Alcohol depresses most brain functions, from balance to breathing. And although effects lessen as booze leaves the body, regular drinking raises tolerance, so that heavier drinkers can drink more without getting drunk. They do, that is, until liver damage reverses the process, which speeds up damage to the brain and the rest of the body. ■



■ Health & Hangovers

Probably the best-known sign that all's not well after a bout with a bottle is the hangover—that miserable feeling that sets in the morning after the night before.

Hangovers, like the ingredients that go into them, differ from drinker to drinker.

Still, regardless of how (and in whom) hangovers happen, morning-after miseries represent the body's reaction to the short-term toxic effects of alcohol.



Problem profile. *The more you drink, the more likely you are to bump into problems associated with drinking.*

And those effects begin to occur at low levels of drinking, even before a drinker feels what alcohol is famous for—its intoxicating effects.

Get the idea?

Even at moderate levels, alcohol is a poison, and at higher levels it's something of a liquid time bomb.

Still (and to balance out the picture) that doesn't automatically mean that it's "better" or healthier not to drink *at all*.

In fact, recent studies have shown that moderate drinkers tend to have lower levels of heart disease than do tea-totalers, and statistics show that moderate drinkers tend to live longer and spend less time in hospitals than both abstainers and heavy drinkers.

Still, *heavy* drinking can lead to all sorts of health problems, and those problems have added up to what's been estimated in the U. S. to add up to at least a \$100 billion annual bill for otherwise-unnecessary health care expenses.

That doesn't even include all the aspirin and all the antacids to ease all the millions of hangovers. That only includes the "hidden" health problems linked to use of the drug.

And there are a *lot* of those. (See "Body Talk," at left, if you still need some more examples.)



Alcohol is a complex drug, the only one we know of that's both fat- and water-soluble, and one which affects all the organs and tissues of the body.

■ An Ounce of Prevention

Unfortunately, there's not a lot you can do to keep your body in *perfect* biochemical condition if you choose to drink.

That's because alcohol is a complex drug, the only one we know of that's both fat- and water-soluble, and one which affects all the organs and tissues of the body.

In fact, recent research has linked alcohol with a higher rate of tumors of the breast, liver, and mouth, along with an added susceptibility to high blood pressure.

And experts increasingly warn against drinking during pregnancy, since even one or two drinks

per week have been linked with a higher risk of stillbirth and miscarriage.

The old adage has never seemed truer. Because an ounce of prevention really *is* worth a pound (or is it a gallon?) of cure.

Still, if you *do* drink (and you plan to keep on drinking) and you want to stay as healthy as possible, drink moderately.

Also, become aware of your diet and the way that foods (and drinking) affect your mood. Follow up by making a commitment to reduce your intake of junk food, fats, and excess sugar. And follow through by setting up (and sticking to) an exercise program.

That's the best way we know to have your cocktail and drink it, too—hopefully, to a ripe old age.

■ You Are What You Drink...

One of the biggest hidden problems in drinking involves the tendency of booze to drain the body's stores of critical vitamins and nutrients.

And while some of the problems arising from a vitamin deficiency can be reversed with daily doses of supplements, others can't be turned around as easily, particularly when they're undetected or untreated.

Let's consider some of the most common:

► **B Vitamins.** Alcohol depletes supplies of B-complex vitamins, which are essential to basic body processes. Vitamin B deficiencies can harm the heart, liver, and other organs and damage muscle and nerve tissues, anemia, even *beriberi* (a disease involving nerve degeneration, muscle weakness, and heart problems).

► **Vitamin A.** Carotene (vitamin A) deficiency reduces the body's resistance to disease and impairs vision, particularly the ability of the eyes to adjust to darkness.

► **Vitamin C.** Alcohol also blocks the body's absorption of vitamin C, and can lead to anemia, reduced resistance to disease, and overstimulation of the adrenal gland.

And alcohol's interference with essential nutrients carries a double whammy: Not only does it drain vitamins already in the body, it also slows absorption and retention of new nutrients. One-a-day, anyone? ■

