

# Alcohol

## **What's the deal with alcohol? Does it have to cause problems?**

Great questions! The quick answers: the majority of college students will consume alcohol at some point, and no, most people do not have problems with alcohol. Check out these tips for consuming in a lower-risk manner.

### **Lower-Risk Drinking is:**

- Determining the number of drinks you plan to consume before drinking
- Eating before and while you are drinking
- Pacing your drinking to no more than one drink per hour
- Consuming no more than four drinks for women, five for men in one sitting
- Alternating alcohol-free drinks and alcohol drinks
- Avoiding drinking games
- Planning how to get home before going out
- Asking friends for help sticking to your drinking "rules"
- Knowing what is in your drink
- Never leaving a drink unattended

Occasionally a person may consume more than planned. Here is some information on the most serious situation, alcohol poisoning, and how you can help.

### **Symptoms of Alcohol Poisoning**

Alcohol depresses the nervous system. This includes the ability to breathe and the gag reflex which prevents choking. High levels of alcohol can stop these functions. Even after someone stops drinking, alcohol is in the system and can be fatal. If you see someone experiencing the following symptoms, call for help immediately:

- Mental confusion
- Semi-consciousness or unconsciousness and cannot be awakened
- Cold, clammy, pale, or bluish skin
- Slowed breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Vomiting while "sleeping" or passed out, and not waking up after vomiting.

If a person has any of these symptoms, s/he is most likely experiencing acute alcohol intoxication.

- Get help & do not leave the person alone. (see resources below)
- Turn the person on his/her side to prevent choking in case of vomiting.
- Always better to be safe than sorry: How can someone be angry at you about caring for him/her?

Online & Off-Campus Resources	On-Campus Resources
<p>Go Ask Alice! – <a href="http://www.goaskalice.columbia.edu">www.goaskalice.columbia.edu</a></p> <p>Online Anonymous Alcohol Self Assessment – <a href="http://www.health.columbia.edu/alcohol">www.health.columbia.edu/alcohol</a></p> <p>Addiction Services Helpline – 877-8 HOPE NY</p> <p>NYC Dept. of Mental Health and Mental Hygiene – 800-LIFENET (available 24 hours a day)</p>	<p>After Hours Clinician On Call – 212-854-9797</p> <p>BASICS – <a href="http://www.health.columbia.edu/alcohol">www.health.columbia.edu/alcohol</a> or 212-854-5453</p> <p>Columbia Health – <a href="http://www.health.columbia.edu">www.health.columbia.edu</a></p> <p>CU-EMS – 212-854-5555</p> <p>Public Safety – 212-854-5555 (or x99 from a campus phone)</p>

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