Adderall: Health risks when combined with alcohol? [1]

Alice,

Many of my friends take Adderall while they drink. What are the possible health risks of doing this? I know Adderall is a stimulant, so can you drink much more alcohol while on it without feeling the effects as much?

Answer

Dear Reader,

Adderall is a prescription drug in the amphetamine class used for treating Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It works mainly on the neurotransmitter, dopamine. Adderall is a stimulant; however, when it is taken in prescribed doses for people with ADD and ADHD, it helps them maintain their attention for a longer duration, allowing them to study or work more effectively, without experiencing the medication's "speed-like" effects.

When combining alcohol with Adderall, people find that the depressive effects of alcohol are lessened. For this reason, some people take Adderall before or while they are drinking, so that they may party longer, allowing them to drink more and to delay the "sleepy, drunk-like" feeling. Basically, Adderall allows people who are drinking to party much longer into the night and decrease the likelihood of sleeping or passing out.

It's important to note that using stimulants like Adderall to prolong drinking may result in a person consuming unhealthy, potentially dangerous, amounts of alcohol. If Adderall is in your system and blocking the depressant effects of alcohol, it's much easier to miss your body's warning signs that you've had enough to drink; possibly to the point of developing alcohol poisoning. To offer a simple answer to your complex question ? it's not advised to mix alcohol and Adderall without a proper prescription and a conversation with your health care provider.

Now, what may happen to a person who uses Adderall without a prescription? Side effects from taking this drug when it is not prescribed for someone may include:

Short and Long Term Psychological Effects

- Paranoia
- Psychotic episodes
- Anxiety
- Severe depression (upon withdrawal)
Adverse Physical Effects from Short Term Use

- Nausea/vomiting
- Insomnia
- Weight loss
- Palpitations
- Headaches

Chronic Physical Effects from Long Term Use

- Convulsions
- Irregular heartbeat
- Fevers
- Malnutrition/weight loss
- Tremors and muscle twitching

Based on what you have written, it's not clear if you have a prescription for Adderall, and if so, for what diagnosis. For your own personal health and safety, it makes sense to not combine Adderall with alcohol. Although there have been no studies combining alcohol and Adderall, alcohol seems to exacerbate many of the above side effects.

In addition, it is unhealthy and unsafe to take prescription drugs outside of the purpose for which it was prescribed for her/him by her/his medical provider, as someone may have serious adverse reactions to the misuse of these drugs.

- Long-term use of Adderall has been shown to alter brain function permanently, as irregular blood flow in the brain may cause chronic convulsions and tremors.
- A person may not know the dosage of Adderall that s/he is taking when using another's prescription. If the prescription is written for someone who weighs more than that person, s/he may easily take too high of a dose, placing her/him at risk for acute adverse effects.

It seems as though you and your friends want to find ways to prolong your nights out, but combining Adderall and alcohol may not be the way to go. Drinking your beverages a bit more slowly, alternating with water in between, and eating before and while you are drinking will help you keep going all night long.

Alice!

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