

If You Are A Woman...What You Should Know About Alcohol

MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BODIES ARE DIFFERENT

Women are more vulnerable to alcohol and its effects than men.

Women generally have more fat and less water in their bodies. Alcohol is water soluble so less water in the body translates to a higher blood alcohol concentration.

Women have less of the active enzyme alcohol dehydrogenase, which begins to break down alcohol in the stomach lining. Less enzyme means more alcohol in the system.

Changes in hormonal levels during a woman's menstrual cycle may affect how she metabolizes alcohol.

WHY SOME WOMEN DRINK

Women are more likely to drink if they have:

- Negative self-image or self-esteem
- Early onset of puberty
- High levels of anxiety
- Depression
- History of sexual abuse
- Poor academic performance
- Strained relationship with parents
- Low parental monitoring
- Friends who drink
- Parents or siblings who drink
- Living in areas with high crime rates

SOCIAL AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Teenage girls are more likely to drink to fit in with their friends than teenage boys.

Women are often introduced to alcohol by their boyfriends who may be older and more likely to drink.

Women are more influenced by their boyfriend's friends than their own friends.

SEXUAL ENCOUNTERS AND ASSAULT

Alcohol impairs judgment leading to increase in risky sexual behavior.

Women who drink are more likely to have unprotected sex than women who do not drink, increasing chances of sexually transmitted infections, HIV transmission, and unplanned pregnancy.

Women are more likely to have sex they regret when they have been drinking.

The likelihood of sexual assault by an acquaintance increases if the offender, the victim, or both drink alcohol. Some of the reported sexual assault cases include consumption of alcohol by the offender, victim, or both.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND DISEASE

The more alcohol a woman drinks (between her first period and first full-term pregnancy) the greater her risk of developing breast cancer - an increase of 11%.

Women develop liver disease over a shorter period of time after drinking less alcohol than men.

Drinking during teen years may compromise bone health and increase risk of osteoporosis. Alcohol can also disrupt menstrual cycles.

MENTAL HEALTH AND DEPRESSION

Women who drink are twice likely to consider suicide than nondrinkers.

Women often drink to improve their mood or increase their confidence. Women who are heavy drinkers are more likely to drink to escape problems.

WOMEN AND THEIR FUTURE

Women who drink face higher risks of trouble with the family, rocky romantic relationships, emotional distress, physical health problems, and job instability.

Adapted from
www.parentactionondrugs.org



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