

Alcohol Effects & You

What Alcohol Can Do:

What May Happen to You:

Brain

Lungs

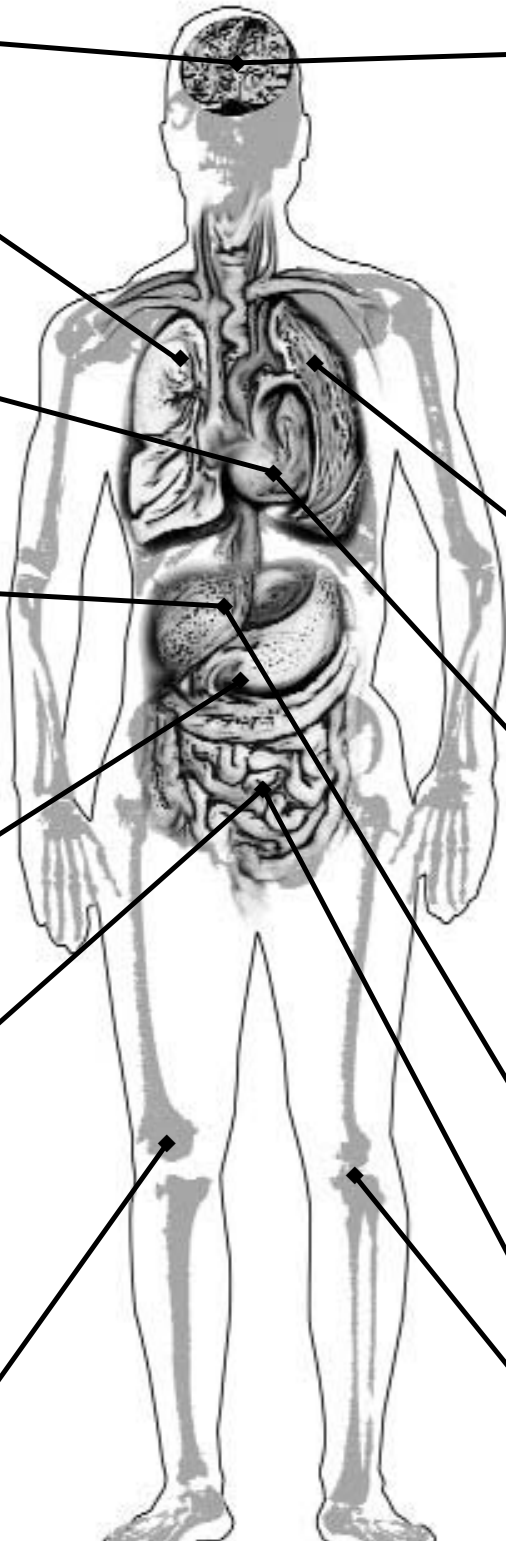
Heart

Liver

Stomach

Intestines & Pancreas

Bones & Muscles



WARNING: Long term drinking may result in permanent brain damage, serious mental disorders, and addiction to alcohol.

Alcohol Effects & You

What Alcohol Can Do:

Brain

Alcohol depresses nerve cells impairing brain function.

Lungs

Large amounts of alcohol lower resistance to infection or can cause breathing to stop.

Heart

Alcohol impairs the heart muscles' ability to pump blood, leading to abnormal heart function and irregular heart beat.

Liver

Chronic heavy drinking may cause alcoholic hepatitis (inflammation and destruction of the liver cells) and then cirrhosis (irreversible lesions, scarring and destruction of liver cells).

Stomach

Alcohol irritates the stomach and can lead to peptic ulcers, bleeding lesions and cancer.

Intestines & Pancreas

Alcohol can impair the breakdown and absorption of nutrients by damaging the cells lining the intestinal tract and colon, causing inflammation, ulcers and cancer of the intestines and colon. The pancreas can become inflamed and leak digestive enzymes which attack the pancreas itself.

Bones & Muscles

Alcohol interferes with the body's ability to absorb calcium resulting in bones being weak and thinner (osteoporosis). Muscles also become weaker and uncoordinated.

What May Happen to You:

- Because your cells are dulled, altered or damaged, you initially experience mild euphoria, and loss of inhibition.

- As alcohol continues to affect regions of the brain controlling behavior and emotion, your memory, concentration and coordination become impaired. You can experience extreme mood swings and emotional outbursts.

- Your vision is impaired, your hearing is unclear, your senses of taste and smell are dulled. You experience an altered sense of time and space. Your fine motor skills are reduced as are your abilities to react. You suffer a loss of pain perception.

- As a heavy drinker, you have more pulmonary infections and can be more susceptible to pneumonia and lung collapse. You lose your reflexes and cannot clear your airway when you vomit. Stomach contents may get sucked into the lungs, which can lead to choking or pneumonia.

- You can suffer from heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure and heart failure. Even social drinkers who binge on special occasions can sometimes experience bouts of irregular heartbeats, otherwise known as "holiday heart."

- Prolonged alcohol abuse can cause anemia and abnormal blood clotting, resulting in excessive bleeding and easy bruising. A reduced white cell count from excessive bleeding increases your susceptibility to infection.

- Because your liver's ability to remove yellow pigment is impaired, your skin appears yellow (jaundice). Liver damage causes fluid to build in the extremities (edema). Your liver will accumulate fat which can cause liver failure, coma and death.

- You experience nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, sweating & loss of appetite.

- You can suffer from arthritis and deformed joints, and can experience atrophied muscles with acute muscle pain and weakness.

- If you are a male, alcohol impairs your production of sperm and testosterone, and can lead to infertility and impotence. In females, decreased estrogen metabolism in the liver increases the amount of estrogen circulating in the body, which can contribute to menstrual irregularities and infertility.

WARNING: Long term drinking may result in permanent brain damage, serious mental disorders, and addiction to alcohol.

