

# COMMON MYTHS ABOUT ALCOHOL



**MYTH:** Alcohol gives you energy.

**FACT:** Actually, it's the opposite. Alcohol is a drug. It's a depressant and slows down your ability to think, speak and move. Even at low levels, it affects your perception, coordination and judgement, long before any physical signs of impairment occur.

**MYTH:** Switching between beer, wine and spirits will affect you more than sticking to one type of alcohol.

**FACT:** Wrong. Your blood alcohol concentration or BAC – the percentage of alcohol in your blood – is what counts, not the beverages consumed. Alcohol is alcohol.

**MYTH:** You'll be more affected by spirits than by beer or a wine cooler.

**FACT:** A drink is a drink is a drink. A 12-oz. bottle of beer (5% alc./vol.), a 5-oz. glass of wine (12% alc./vol.) and a 1.5-oz. serving of spirits (40% alc./vol.) are all equal in absolute alcohol content.

**MYTH:** It's just beer. It can't permanently damage you.

**FACT:** Any kind of alcohol, if consumed irresponsibly, has the potential to seriously damage your digestive system. Alcohol abuse can damage your brain, heart, liver, stomach and other critical organs. Not to mention that it could also take years away from your life.

**MYTH:** Everybody reacts the same way to alcohol.

**FACT:** Everyone is different. There are dozens of factors that affect reactions to alcohol: your gender, body weight, body chemistry, time of day, how you feel mentally, fatigue – and the list goes on.

**MYTH:** Eating a big meal before you drink will keep you sober.

**FACT:** Food in your stomach only delays the absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream. A full stomach doesn't prevent the effects of alcohol or intoxication.

**MYTH:** You can drink and still be in control.

**FACT:** Alcohol impairs your judgement, which increases the likelihood that you will do something you'll regret, such as having unprotected sex, being involved in crime, damaging property, or being victimized by others.\*

**MYTH:** The worst thing that can happen when you drink too much is ending up with a raging hangover.

**FACT:** If only. For one thing, if you drink a lot of alcohol quickly, it can build up in your body so much that you can die from alcohol poisoning within only a few hours. As well, you're more prone to injury, which can be serious or fatal. You may also end up getting behind the wheel of a car and severely injuring or killing someone – or yourself. Definitely much worse than a hangover.

**MYTH:** One drink won't affect your driving.

**FACT:** People have trouble judging how seriously alcohol has affected them. That means many individuals who drive after drinking one drink think they can control a car – but they're wrong. This can have deadly consequences.\*

**MYTH:** A cold shower and a cup of coffee are good ways to sober up.

**FACT:** Although they may make you feel clean and awake, nothing sobers you up but time. Coffee is a stimulant – it'll keep you awake but won't sober you up.

**MYTH:** If someone passes out after drinking, it's best to let them sleep it off.

**FACT:** If a friend or a guest passes out, never leave them alone. Have someone call 911 for medical assistance. Be sure to roll them onto their side, with their head on its side as well, until help comes.

**MYTH:** There is no point in postponing drinking until you're 19.

**FACT:** Research shows that the longer you postpone drinking, the less likely you are to ever experience alcohol-related problems. Plus, it's against the law.\*

**MYTH:** Teens can't become alcoholics because they haven't been drinking long enough.

**FACT:** You can develop alcoholism at any age. It depends how much and how often you drink.

**MYTH:** It's none of my business if a friend is drinking too much.

**FACT:** If you're a real friend, it is your business. You can't make them change, but you can be honest. Who knows? Maybe they'll listen. You might even be able to help them decide to get help.

**MYTH:** Drugs are a bigger problem than alcohol.

**FACT:** Alcohol is a drug – and one of the deadliest. Alcohol misuse and abuse costs Ontario millions each year. These costs include health care, law enforcement, fire and property damage, and productivity losses.

**MYTH:** Alcohol makes you sexier.

**FACT:** Alcohol clouds your judgement and makes you less inhibited. You could end up engaging in something you hadn't planned on, including unprotected and/or unwanted sex. That puts you at risk of unwanted pregnancy and contracting sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV). Definitely not sexy.

**MYTH:** People who drink too much only hurt themselves.

**FACT:** Everyone who drinks has a parent, grandparent, sibling, friend, boyfriend or girlfriend who worries about them. And what if the problem drinker flunks out of school or gets behind the wheel of a car and kills someone?

***To learn more about alcohol and its effects, call the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health's Drug, Alcohol and Mental Health Information Line at 1-800-463-6273. In Toronto, call 416 595-6111 or visit their Web site at [www.camh.net](http://www.camh.net). You can also call the Drug and Alcohol Registry of Treatment (DART) at 1-800-565-8603 or check out [www.dart.on.ca](http://www.dart.on.ca) to find out about treatment services in your community and throughout Ontario.***

*Adapted with permission from the American Academy of Pediatrics' "Debunking the Myths of Alcohol"  
© 2000 –American Academy of Pediatrics with the exception of those marked \* which are adapted with permission from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism's "Top Ten Myths About Alcohol".*