



# Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week

## BINGE DRINKING FACTS

Updated 2008/09

### What is binge drinking?

- Binge drinking is usually defined as drinking 5 or more standard drinks in a row for a male and 4 or more standard drinks in a row for a female (a standard drink is 12oz beer, a 5oz glass of wine, or 1.5oz of spirits). Sometimes this pattern of drinking is called excessive/heavy drinking. Binge/heavy drinking patterns may be irregular and infrequent, or they may be regular and frequent, lasting only a few hours or several days. In Statistics Canada's *Health Indicators (Vol. 2004 No. 1)*, heavy drinking is defined as current drinkers (aged 12+) who reported drinking 5 or more drinks on one occasion, 12 or more times a year. Binge/heavy drinking may occur at a party, where it may not seem out of place, or it may occur in less socially appropriate situations. In the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba's report *Alcohol and other Drug Use In Manitoba Students (2005)*, a significant number of students surveyed identified that they are drinking quite heavily on a regular basis. About 15% of them drink 8 or more drinks about once a month or more frequently, and they are more likely to be male. In S4 over half of the males (53%) indicated they drink five or more at a sitting; less than 40% of the females drink this much.

### Do binge drinkers have a drinking problem?

- Although binge drinking or drinking to get drunk may be hazardous to one's health, safety and physical well being, one or two episodes of binge drinking does not necessarily mean that the drinker has a drinking problem. Repeated episodes, however, may indicate otherwise. Binge drinking becomes problem drinking when it repeatedly interferes with the person's functioning in other areas, such as: family life, friendships, personal relationships, workplace/school performance, physical health, etc.

### Who is most likely to be a binge drinker?

- Binge drinking is most common among young adults ages 18 to 24 years. Canadian drinkers in this age group report 15-20 episodes of such drinking over the past year. About half of young drinkers, age 15-17, will report episodes of binge drinking over the past year. *The Canadian Campus Survey 1998* indicated 15.4% (approx. 68,000) university students are drinking harmfully or hazardously. It also indicated that those reporting the highest rates of heavy drinking lived in residences, had low academic orientation and high recreational orientation. Most young people indulging in binge drinking during these years will gradually moderate their drinking patterns. However, frequent binge drinking in early adulthood is a known risk factor for later problem drinking. Results from the 2004 Canadian Campus Survey will be released in the fall of 2005.

### Do binge drinkers experience more alcohol-related problems?

- In the *Canadian Campus Survey 1998* students reported hazardous drinking consequences such as: unplanned sex (6.5%); driving after drinking (4.9%); driving while drinking (3.3%); etc. Other consequences included: missing classes due to a hangover (10.5%) or due to drinking (7.3%).
- In the same study, the most commonly cited problem experienced during a student's lifetime was hangover (69.3%); followed by having regretted actions (43.7%) and memory loss (36.2%).
- A 2003 *Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CEC)* study published in the journal *Pediatrics* found that women who binge drink are more likely to have an unplanned pregnancy.

### Can binge drinkers overdose?...What are some of the warning signs?

- Heavy bingeing raises the risk of an alcohol overdose or alcohol poisoning. In a relatively brief period, a young person can consume a toxic dose of spirit alcohol, which may lead to loss of consciousness and possibly death. Warning signs that someone may be suffering from an alcohol overdose may include: being unable to rouse the person from alcohol induced sleep or stupor, cold and clammy skin, and shallow breathing. Medical care is needed. Drinking contests can end in tragedy!

**For your own personal safety...get the facts on Binge Drinking!**

# Binge Drinking...Get the Facts!

Use this questionnaire & Fact Sheet to promote awareness of the facts on Binge Drinking: publish them in whole or in part in your campus/school/community newspaper, use them on restaurant/ cafeteria placemats, post them in halls, lounges or washrooms, add them to your web site/send them to electronic mailboxes.

- ❖ **Explore what you know or believe.... Answer the questionnaire provided below.**
- ❖ **Want to know more?....**
  - Surf some web sites on binge drinking, such as:
    - The Bacchus and Gamma Peer Education Network  
<http://www.bacchusgamma.org>;
    - The Student Life Education Company <http://www.studentlifeeducation.com/>;
    - Drinking 101 <http://www.mcneese.edu/community/alcohol/index.html>
  - Read the accompanying **Fact Sheet on Binge Drinking**
  - Borrow a video on this topic from the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Library - 204-944-6279.
- ❖ **Become a better risk manager!....** Use this information to better anticipate and manage risk in your own life. Are any of the "Fact Sheet" points hot buttons for you? What actions might you consider?
  - Manitoba Liquor Control Commission has launched a new web site to help young people assess their drinking habits and to provide information on the over consumption of alcohol. Visit it at [www.beundrunk.com](http://www.beundrunk.com).



## Binge / Heavy Drinking Questionnaire

Questions	Agree	Disagree	Don't Know
1. Binge drinking is a form of alcoholism.			
2. About half of young drinkers, aged 15-17 will report Episodes of binge drinking over the past year.			
3. Canadian drinkers, aged 20-24, will typically report 15-20 episodes of binge drinking over the past year.			
4. Canadian college students have reported engaging in hazardous drinking consequences such as: unplanned/unprotected sex and driving after or while drinking.			
5. Binge drinking is a sign of distress or deep unhappiness.			
6. Heavy bingeing raises the risk of alcohol overdose or alcohol poisoning.			
7. For most binge drinkers, intoxication or getting drunk is the main purpose for drinking.			
8. Binge drinking can affect your school performance.			
9. Heavy or binge drinking occurs most frequently among males.			
10. Binge and heavy drinking can be related to specific risk			

factors...do you know what they are?			
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