

Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week

Fast Facts on Alcohol *Updated 2008*

Everything You've Always Wanted to Know About Alcohol But Were Afraid to Ask.....

- ✪ Is alcohol really a drug?
 - 1) No, because it's legally available to people 18 years and older.
 - 2) No, because it's legal it's safe, not like drugs.
 - 3) Yes, it is a depressant.

Answer: (3) Alcohol is a drug. It is a depressant; it slows down the body and interferes with coordination and reaction time. The relationship between the drug and the person can be serious and potentially dangerous. Data from *Alcohol and Other Drug Use in Manitoba Students*, published by the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba in 2005, indicates that almost 70% of students surveyed (6673 randomly selected grade 7 – S4 students) indicated that they had consumed alcohol; with 50% of the total sample reporting that they had consumed alcohol in the previous year. Survey results indicated that males were more likely to drink than females and that students in the more senior grades are more likely to drink than those in younger grades, almost 90% compared with about 1/3 of younger students. In addition, the data showed that as students enter the later grades they are more likely to miss important homework deadlines due to drinking, for example over 15% of S2 students surveyed indicated they had experienced this drinking-related problem. Both males and females who drank more frequently were much more likely to report lower grades.

- ✪ Does coffee sober you up?
 - 1) Yes, but only if you drink three or more cups.
 - 2) Only if you stare at your cup for six hours.
 - 3) Yes, but only if you drink it black with lots of sugar.

Answer: (2) It is a myth that coffee will sober you up. Only time can eliminate alcohol from your bloodstream. The physical effects of alcohol are often not well understood. One study has shown that 70% of respondents incorrectly believed that cold showers could sober someone up, and 62% thought coffee would do it (Kinney, Jean. *Loosening the Grip: A Handbook of Alcohol Information*, 2000).

- ✪ Can you overdose on alcohol?
 - 1) Not if you're drinking beer.
 - 2) Only if you drink it through a straw.
 - 3) If you drink more than your body can metabolize.

Answer: (3) The effects of alcohol do not depend on whether the drink is beer, wine or liquor. One standard size beer or one glass of wine has roughly the same amount of alcohol as one mixed drink. "Binge drinking", having 5 or more drinks at a sitting, is used as a measure of heavy drinking. Having 8 or more drinks is a level of hazardous drinking that contributes to more extreme intoxication and exposes the user to such risks as violence, injury, sexual assault, etc. Data from the *Alcohol and Other Drug Use in Manitoba Students* (AFM, 2005), indicates there are a significant number of students drinking quite heavily on a regular basis. In S4 over half of the males surveyed (53%) indicated they drink five or more at a sitting, whereas less than 40% of the females drink this much.

- ★ What happens to the brain when you drink?
 - 1) It stops working.
 - 2) It warms up and becomes more effective.
 - 3) It becomes numb.

Answer: (3) Alcohol numbs the senses; it acts on the brain in much the same way as ether. When it is very cold out, a person who has had too much to drink can get severe frostbite or die of hypothermia.

- ★ How long do you have to dance to eliminate two drinks faster?
 - 1) Dancing doesn't help.
 - 2) Time is not important as long as you sweat a lot.
 - 3) At least 30 minutes.

Answer: (1) Drinking coffee, dancing or taking a cold shower will not help. Only time can eliminate alcohol from your bloodstream.

- ★ What amount of alcohol can you safely drink when pregnant?
 - 1) Any amount of wine or beer .
 - 2) One drink a week.
 - 3) No amount of alcohol can be safely consumed while pregnant.

Answer: (3) All sexually active women of childbearing age, who consume alcohol, are at risk of having a child with Alcohol Related Birth Defects. The current recommendation in Canada and the U.S. is to abstain from ALL alcohol during pregnancy. Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is a 100% preventable birth defect.

- ★ How can you get home safely after consuming alcohol?
 - 1) Eat a big meal.
 - 2) Walk 20 minutes outside.
 - 3) Arrange for a ride home with someone who has 0 mg of alcohol in their bloodstream.

Answer: (3) No matter what you do, it takes time to eliminate alcohol from the bloodstream. This time will vary based on gender, weight, metabolism, liver function, etc. There's no magical formula, be safe not sorry!

- ★ Does alcohol really warm up the body?
 - 1) No, in fact, alcohol causes the body to lose its heat.
 - 2) Yes, if you drink enough to make your nose red.
 - 3) Yes, if you drink it straight up and outside, preferably.

Answer: (1) Under the effects of alcohol, the blood vessels dilate and heat is lost through the pores of the skin.

Source: *Alcohol and other Drug Use In Manitoba Students*, Addictions Foundation of Manitoba, 2005. *Alcohol Fast Facts* format based on an activity in "I'M PROUD TO BE STRONG", published by the Gouvernement du Québec, 1999.