

# EXTREME DRINKING – OVER THE EDGE

## MYTHS AND REALITY...

**Myth #1:** Eating will sober me up.

**Reality:** Food will slow down the absorption of alcohol, but it will not help you to sober up. No amount of coffee, walking, cold showers or food will help. Remember, the liver can only process about one standard drink of alcohol per hour, so time is the only thing that works.

**Myth #2:** If I switch from hard liquor to beer, I can drink more and not get as drunk.

**Reality:** The impact of alcohol is unpredictable. However, it is the amount of ethanol (pure alcohol) consumed and how fast you drink that impacts intoxication, not the type of drink. If you are still consuming equal amounts of the standard size drink, it will have the same effect. If you want a strategy for not getting as drunk, go for drinks with less alcohol content, alternate with pop or juice, and avoid “free pouring”.

**Myth #3:** Getting shit-faced is no big deal.

**Reality:** In Nova Scotia, research with young adults showed that most felt there is a big difference between drinking to socialize and drinking to get smashed. The same research showed that this group was turned off by slurring, stumbling drinkers. Drinking too much, too fast can put you at risk for more than simple embarrassment, it can lead to injury and alcohol overdose.

**Myth #4:** Taking two acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) before I go to sleep will lessen my hangover.

**Reality:** The only thing you can do to reduce your chances of having a hangover is to drink less. A hangover is your body’s response to the toxins in alcohol and to dehydration. Taking drugs such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen in combination with alcohol is risky. It can cause liver damage, stomach problems and depress your central nervous system. Mixing alcohol with any drug is a recipe for trouble. However, because alcohol dehydrates your body, drinking lots of water before you go to bed is a good idea.

**Myth #5:** I can sleep off alcohol, and I’m okay to drive the next morning.

**Reality:** If you’ve ever had that “still drunk feeling” in the morning, it’s because you probably were. Alcohol impairs your balance and coordination and this can last into the next day. It takes about one hour for your body to rid itself of each standard drink. You do the math. If enough time hasn’t passed, you’re not okay to drive.

### A standard drink – it may be less than you think



1 standard drink = 341 ml/12-oz. can or bottle of beer  
5% alcohol



= 142 ml/5-oz. glass of wine  
13% alcohol



= 43 ml/1.5-oz. of hard liquor  
40% alcohol

Higher alcohol beers and coolers have more alcohol than one standard drink.

A standard drink contains 13.6 grams of alcohol. Here is the number of standard drinks contained in some common purchases:

Case of beer (12-pack, 5% alcohol)	=	12 standard drinks
Bottle of wine (750 ml, 13% alcohol)	=	5 standard drinks
Bottle of rum (750 ml, 40% alcohol)	=	18 standard drinks

THE AMOUNT OF ALCOHOL IT TAKES FOR YOU TO PASS OUT IS DANGEROUSLY CLOSE TO THE AMOUNT IT TAKES TO KILL YOU

## IF SOMEONE IS DRUNK ...

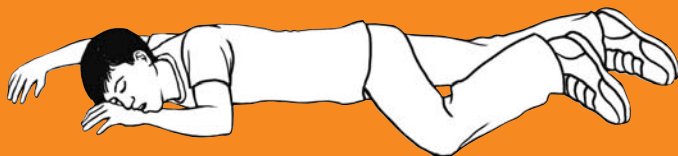
- Don't put them in a cold shower.
- Don't give them something to drink or eat to "help them sober up".
- Don't let them go for a walk.
- Don't let them drive a car, boat or even a bicycle.

## SIGNS OF SERIOUS TROUBLE...

- A person has passed out and cannot be awoken.
- They have cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin.
- Their breathing is slow and irregular.
- They vomit in their sleep.

## TAKE ACTION!

- If they are conscious but seem confused, take them home and don't let them drink any more.
- Don't let them leave the party with someone they just met.
- If they appear about to pass out or have passed out, turn them onto their side into what is known as the "recovery position". This will help to prevent choking if they vomit.
- If passed out, stay with them and periodically wake them with a shake or pinch.

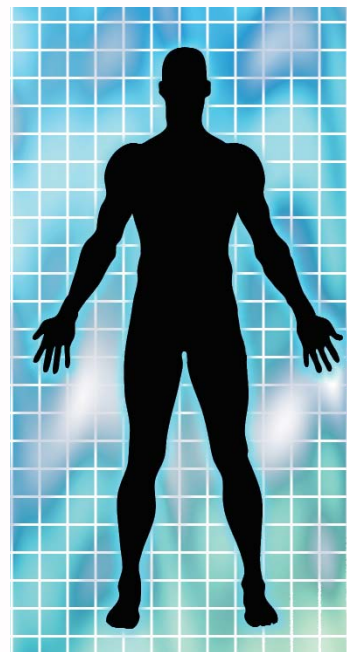


- If at any time, you can't wake them with a shake or pinch, call 911.
- If breathing is irregular, they appear unconscious, or their skin has a bluish color, call 911 immediately.
- Never leave the person alone.
- Don't let fear about how your friend may react prevent you from getting help when it's needed.

## WHAT HAPPENS TO MY BODY WHEN I DRINK ALCOHOL

### My Body and Alcohol:

- Unlike food, alcohol is not digested. It goes right into your bloodstream and is processed by the liver to get rid of it.
- It affects your brain first by lowering inhibitions and impairing your judgment.
- Add more alcohol, and it impairs coordination, balance, and speech.
- In extreme drinking, the brain starts slowing down your heart rate and breathing.
- That day or the next, your hangover is the body's response to the toxins in alcohol and to dehydration.



## HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

Sometimes it's difficult to tell during a party if you are consuming too much. Whether or not you choose to drink is up to you. And only you can decide how much is too much.

**For more information, visit the website or contact the Addiction Services office closest to you.**

Amherst	902-667-7094
Antigonish	902-863-5393
Bridgewater	902-543-7882
Elmsdale	902-883-0295
Halifax, Dartmouth and area (Capital Health)	902-424-5623
Kentville	902-679-2392
Liverpool	902-354-3422
Lunenburg	902-634-7325
Middleton	902-825-6828
New Glasgow	902-755-7017
Pictou	902-485-4335
Port Hawkesbury	902-625-2363
Springhill	902-597-2156
Sydney	902-563-2590
Truro	902-893-5900
Yarmouth	902-742-2406