

The most recent literature on the drinking behavior of college students indicates that anywhere from 80% to 90% of all college students drink alcohol. Students generally have a higher drinking prevalence than others their age and much more than the rest of society. Although alcohol appears to be the drug of choice for college students, many students have the misguided belief that **most** college students engage in heavy or binge drinking (drinking 4 to 5 or more drinks in one evening as part of a single drinking episode). Research demonstrates that the majority of students do **not** binge drink. **In fact, 60% to 65% of college students report that they do not binge drink.** Thus, even though the majority of students report alcohol consumption, less than half report binge drinking behavior.

**1 Drink = 1 Beer or
1 Glass of
Wine or**



Some Interesting Facts About ECU Students & Drinking

- ◆ 74% of ECU students believe their peers drink 3 times a week - only 17% report drinking this often
- ◆ 7 out of 10 ECU students do NOT drink to get drunk
- ◆ 95% of ECU students do NOT drink from Sunday to Thursday

Study results from the CORE Institute Alcohol and Other Drug Survey, administered Spring 1997.

What is the big concern about binge drinking?

Heavy drinking has been linked to other problem behaviors including:

- ◆ Date Rape
- ◆ Accidents
- ◆ Academic Problems
- ◆ Unintended Pregnancy
- ◆ STIs (sexually transmitted infections)
- ◆ Vandalism

What are the distinctions in drinking behavior?

Many terms are attached to various drinking behaviors. The following terms are defined to present the spectrum of drinking behaviors.

ABSTAINERS: People who choose to abstain from drinking beverages containing alcohol. About 30% of the U.S. population abstains from drinking alcohol. The percentage of abstainers in the U.S. is increasing.

OCCASIONAL DRINKERS: People who drink beverages containing alcohol rarely or once in awhile. This person never drinks to the point of intoxication.

SOCIAL DRINKERS: People who drink regularly in social settings but seldom consume enough alcohol to become intoxicated. An important thought to remember:

~~If you need a drink to be social,
it is not social drinking.~~

BINGE DRINKERS: The definition of binge drinking varies. Binge drinking involves both the quantity of drinks consumed and the time period in which one drinking episode occurs.



Binge Drinking for Men: For most men consuming 5 or more drinks in one drinking episode and repeating this pattern one or more times in a two week period.



Binge Drinking for Women: For most women consuming 4 or more drinks in one drinking episode and repeating this pattern one or more times in a two week period.

**It is important to note that the figures given above are estimates only and will vary for each individual. These figures do not account for body weight and other factors influencing intoxication.

PROBLEM DRINKERS: This type of drinking behavior is complex and requires a clinical diagnosis. A well-known and commonly used screening device is called C.A.G.E.

- ◆ Have you ever felt you should **cut down** on your drinking?
- ◆ Have people **annoyed** you by criticizing your drinking?
- ◆ Have you ever felt bad or **guilty** about your drinking?
- ◆ Have you ever had an **eye-opener** first thing in the morning to steady nerves or get rid of a hangover?

If you answered “yes” to two or more of these questions, or if your answer to any of these questions concerns you, you may be using alcohol in ways that are harmful. Refer to the resources in this pamphlet for help.

ALCOHOL QUIZ

Test your knowledge about alcohol by responding to the following questions as either true or false.

1. Coffee helps sober up a drunk person. False. Time is the only thing that will sober up a person. The liver metabolizes about 1/2 an ounce of alcohol per hour (this rate will vary for each person). There is no way to speed up this process. Coffee, exercise, cold showers or any other remedy will only create a wide awake drunk.

2. Alcohol enhances sexual performance.

False. Alcohol may increase desire by decreasing inhibitions. Alcohol is a depressant and decreases one’s ability to function sexually. Because alcohol decreases inhibitions, people are less likely to make self protecting sexual decisions, placing people at greater risk for STDs, unwanted pregnancy, and sexual assault.

3. Men have more of an enzyme present in the stomach that allows them to metabolize more alcohol than women.

True. For non-alcoholic men, the amount of alcohol metabolized by the stomach can be as high as 30%. For women, it is approximately half that amount. As a result of this difference, greater proportions of alcohol enter the bloodstream causing the blood alcohol content (B.A.C.) to increase in women. Thus women may feel a greater effect. In terms of alcohol absorption, differences in body weight, body fat, and hormones between men and women mean that women usually experience the effects of alcohol sooner than men.



4. A drinker who expects to get “high” is more likely to feel or act “high” when drinking.

True. The effects of alcohol can vary greatly between people and different drinking occasions. A person’s mood or social surroundings can determine the way in which alcohol affects the individual. How a person expects to feel during or after drinking has a great deal to do with how they actually act while intoxicated.

5. Women who are on birth control pills absorb alcohol faster and consequently can achieve higher blood alcohol levels.

True. There is mounting evidence that oral contraceptives can raise the BAC for women.

What effects alcohol absorption?

The following factors influence a person's BAC:

- ◆ A larger person has more blood and requires greater amounts of alcohol to reach a given BAC.
- ◆ The presence of food in the stomach slows absorption. The greater the amount of alcohol and the smaller the amount of food in the stomach, the faster the rate of alcohol absorption into the blood-stream resulting in an increase of the BAC.
- ◆ Eating foods high in protein, such as dairy products, can slow the absorption of alcohol.
- ◆ Mixing alcohol with carbonated beverages will increase the rate of alcohol absorption.
- ◆ The more quickly a person ingests alcohol; the more quickly alcohol reaches the blood-stream.
- ◆ The higher the concentration of alcohol in a beverage; the more quickly it is absorbed.



Some other factors to consider...

- ◆ The legal drinking age in all 50 states is 21 and older. Drinking before age 21 makes people vulnerable to substantial fines, legal fees, lowers the chances to find a job, and loss of a drivers license.
- ◆ You have the right to refuse a drink at any time. Refusals can be given in a polite and assertive manner.
- ◆ Get involved in a variety of activities so that social interaction does not depend on alcohol consumption.

If you do drink:

- ◆ Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.
- ◆ Never accept a drink from someone you don’t know, or from “spiked” punches. These drinks may contain unknown quantities of alcohol or other drugs that can cause physical harm.
- ◆ Sip drinks slowly and eat while drinking. Avoid salty foods as these promote thirst.
- ◆ Dilute alcohol beverages by using ice and avoid drinking straight shots.
- ◆ Do not drink on an empty stomach.
- ◆ Never leave your drink unattended. Someone may slip something into your drink.
- ◆ Do not drink and drive.
- ◆ Be responsible for friends or others who appear to drink beyond their limits.

Resources

ECU Student Health Service 328-6841
ECU Center for Counseling and Student Development 328-6661
REAL Crisis Center 758-4357
(Call to determine AA, Alanon, etc., meeting times & locations.)
ECU Regional Training Center 328-4661

Sources:

Health News, 1 (4). Published by the Student Insurance Division. April, 1993.
Haines, M. & Spear, S. (1996). *Journal of American College Health*, 45.
Kinney, J. & Leaton G. (1991). *Loosening the Grip*. St. Louis, MO: Mosby -Year Book.

To Contact Us

General Information(252) 328-6841
Appointments.....(252) 328-6841
Immunizations.....(252) 328-6841
Health Education(252) 328-6794
Pharmacy(252) 328-6793
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gotquestions@mail.ecu.edu

Hours of Operation

Fall and Spring

(Effective mid August 2001)

8:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., Saturday & Sunday, Urgent Care

Fall and Spring Pharmacy Hours

8:00 a.m. - 6:00 p.m. Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. Friday

Summer

(Mid May - Mid August)

7:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday - Thursday
7:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m., Friday

After hours emergencies dial 911

**Student Health Service
East Carolina University
Greenville, NC 27858**

Division of Student Life

Alcohol and YOU

