

# THE EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL ON YOUR BODY AND MIND

What is alcohol? Alcohol is a drink containing ethanol. Ethanol acts as a depressant on the body. This means that it slows down the brain's activities and the activity of the spinal cord. The body actually assesses ethanol to be a poison and takes measures to eliminate it accordingly.

## 1 What does Alcohol Do To You?

How Alcohol Works On You: Alcohol passes from your mouth into your stomach and small intestine, where it is absorbed into the bloodstream. If the stomach is empty, the alcohol is quickly absorbed. Only a few minutes after drinking, alcohol will be across your body. It is then circulated through your liver and on to your heart, lungs and brain.

Effects of Alcohol: 1 Unit of Alcohol = 1 Glass of Wine = 1 Cocktail = 1 Shot = 1/2 Pint of Beer

1 to 3 Units: Flushing of Skin, Heart Speeds Up, Talkative

4 to 6 Units: Judgment is affected, Giddiness, Co-ordination affected

7 to 9 Units: Vision blurred, Speech fuzzy, Reaction time slower

10 to 15 Units: Staggering, Loss of balance, Double Vision

## 2 Liver

**What The Liver Does:** The liver eliminates 90% of alcohol in the body, 10% is excreted through urine and the breath. The liver can only deal with one standard drink in an hour. So, the alcohol in one pint of ordinary strength lager will take two hours to pass out of your body. The excess alcohol affects the brain, heart, muscles, and other tissues of the body.

Short-Term Problems: When the liver is breaking down alcohol it produces acetaldehyde, a substance which has toxic effects on your liver, brain and stomach lining, resulting in headache, nausea, vomiting and heartburn.

Also the liver needs water to do its work but alcohol is a diuretic meaning it removes water. So the liver has to divert water away from other organs including the brain making you feel worse and further dehydrated.

Long-term Damage To Liver: Cirrhosis of the Liver, Alcoholic Hepatitis, Fatty Deposits in Liver

## 3 Kidneys and Rest of The Body

Effects on the Kidneys: Alcohol can have major impacts on the kidneys. The main ways are from causing cell damage and enlarging the kidneys to impacting the various hormones that control kidney function.

Alcohol causes an ionic imbalance in the body that can affect many metabolic processes.

Skin: Because alcohol dehydrates your body and skin, this causes redness of the skin and makes it appear blotchy. This is particularly more marked with women as their skin is thinner than men's so the effects are more marked.

**Brain:** In large amounts, alcohol interferes with some of the chemical messages in your brain. It dramatically reduces your ability to learn and form memories, which is why people experience "blackouts". Long-term heavy drinking can lead to problems in learning new skills.

## 4 Psychological Effects

Psychological Effects: Alcohol can reduce inhibitions which lead to destructive or unhelpful changes in behaviour. Excessive drinking also affects chemical balances within the brain such as the production of serotonin, which regulates moods. So depressive feelings, insomnia and a loss of concentration can be the results.

Magnifying Your Existing Emotions: "What's in a sober man's mind is on a drunken one's tongue" - Alcohol is like a magnifier. If you are depressed, it will make you more depressed. If you are angry, it will make you more angry etc.

Other Psychological Problems: Addiction, Cravings as you rely on alcohol for mood change, Affecting Judgement and Ability to correctly assess threats putting you at risk. It can become a habit which can lead to feelings of boredom and hopelessness.

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