



DON'T DRINK & DRIVE.

The effects of alcohol on the human body

Alcohol is often considered an essential element of adult social functions, but adults who overindulge in alcohol are likely doing themselves a significant disservice. Alcoholic beverages can negatively impact a person's physical and cognitive abilities. But when it is consumed in moderation, alcohol can have some positive effects as well. Understanding what alcohol really does to the body and brain may help some people make more informed choices.

The Good

The idea that alcohol can have both good and bad effects on the body may seem like a mixed message, but that does not mean it isn't true. The effect of alcohol on a person's body often depends on the frequency and quantity of alcohol that individual con-

sumes. Moderate alcohol consumption, such as one or two drinks per day, can have a positive impact on a person's health. The Mayo Clinic says moderate alcohol consumption may provide the following benefits:

- Possibly reduce risk of diabetes
- Possibly reduce risk of ischemic strokes
- Lower risk of gallstones
- Reduce the risk of dying of a heart attack
- Reduce risk of developing heart disease.

According to the Harvard School of Public Health, alcohol has the ability to raise good cholesterol and lower bad cholesterol. Anti-inflammatory effects and antioxidants in some beverages, such as wine, can reduce blood problems that lead to clogged arteries.

Alcohol in mod-

eration may also help fight fat. A 2010 study published in The Archives of Internal Medicine found that women who had one or two drinks per day were less likely to gain weight than those who didn't drink at all. Researchers believe there is a link between people who drink frequently and how their bodies adapt and metabolize alcohol differently from those who limit their drinking to nights out on the town or otherwise only drink rarely.

Alcohol increases levels of a hormone that improves insulin sensitivity and makes it easier for the body to process glucose and use it as energy, potentially benefiting those with type 2 diabetes.

Although alcohol may be associated with poor judgement, moderate drinking may stave off cognitive impairment. Alcohol may improve blood flow to the brain and make brain cells more tolerant to stress, preparing them for major stresses that can induce dementia down the

road.

The Bad

When moderate drinking turns into compulsive or binge drinking, the positive benefits of alcohol consumption no

longer apply. Drinking too much can take a serious toll on the body.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol can interfere with the

brain's communication pathways. While it does not destroy brain cells, it certainly inhibits them, impairing an individual's ability to think clearly.

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Driving under the influence remains one of America's most committed crimes, not to mention deadliest. Drinking and Driving during the holidays can do more than just ruin your holiday fun. Consider these other pitfalls:

- Financial Penalties
- Loss of your drivers license
- Destruction of your vehicle
- Injury, or even DEATH

Follow These Friendly Tips When You Go Out:

- Designate a sober driver before going out and give that person your keys;
- If you're impaired, call a taxi, use mass transit or call a sober friend or family member to get you home safely;
- If available, use your community's Sober Rides program;
- Promptly report drunk drivers you see on the roadways to law enforcement;
- Wearing your safety belt while in a car or using a helmet and protective gear when on a motorcycle is your best defense against an impaired driver;
- And remember, Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk, If you know someone who is about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going.

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