

Binge Drinking, Drowning in Alcohol

What is “binge drinking”? Binge drinking is defined as five standard drinks in a row for men and four for women. A “standard drink” is 12 grams of pure ethanol, which equals:

- 12 ounces of beer or wine cooler
- 8 ounces of malt liquor
- 5 ounces of wine
- 1½ ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits (whiskey, etc.)

Alcohol affects women more quickly than men, adjusting for weight, because men’s bodies have a greater percentage of water by volume.

Heavy, fast drinking is terribly risky, because it can spiral out of control. Hangover is a given: headache, thirst, nausea, vomiting, sensitivity to light and noise, blurry vision, shakiness, and exhaustion. Alcohol poisoning and respiratory arrest, which can progress to coma or death, are major risks. Injuries or death from falls, drowning,, and other accidents are common. Bingers are more likely to have unsafe sex, leading to pregnancy and STDs. Being drunk costs someone his reasoning ability movement control, and reaction speed, making him/her deadly behind the wheel of a car.

Binge drinking is not alcoholism, but binge drinkers are more likely to become alcoholics. The disease of alcoholism worsens over time until alcoholics crave alcohol and can’t limit their drinking. They continue to drink in spite of the real problems it causes in their lives. Alcoholics need more and more alcohol to feel the same effect. It’s a true, physical addiction, complete with painful withdrawal symptoms. *And it can happen to anyone.*

Heavy or long-term drinking causes irreversible, often fatal damage to the body. Effects include:

- Liver diseases
- Heart disease and stroke
- Brain cell death
- Cancer of the mouth, pharynx, esophagus, breast, pancreas, liver, colon, and rectum
- Limited normal growth in youth people
- Damage to eyes and skin
- Malnutrition and gastric illnesses
- Sexual problems in men and women.

Women who are – or could be- pregnant must not drink any alcohol! Alcohol use during pregnancy is the #1 cause of nonhereditary mental retardation and causes *lifelong* hyperactive behavior and learning disabilities.

It's possible to binge on food, spending, gambling, or drugs. All are destructive. Binge drinking, though, often masquerades as a game or rite of passage. When someone drinks large amounts of alcohol in a short time, specifically to get drunk, it's a binge and it's a potentially deadly game.

Nearly 60% of students say that alcohol is not important at a party. No surprise – Drinkers cause big problems for others. Non-drinkers experience insults and arguments, vandalism, assaults, and unwanted sexual advances because of others' heavy drinking. No wonder the majority thinks getting drunk is **not** cool!

If your goal is to get drunk, you need to take a hard look at your life. High-risk, binge drinking is not “normal” in high school, in college, or in life after college. Binge drinking is not a rite of passage; it is not a funny phase; and it is not cool.

