

Alcohol: knowing the facts

Easy · 10 min to read · Free

Alcohol is the most common drug used by people under 21, and about 4,000 young people die from excessive drinking each year. One standard drink is 12 oz of 5% beer, 5 oz of wine or 1.5 oz of liquor, and a strong beer or mixed drink can be two or more. Blood alcohol keeps rising after someone stops drinking or passes out, so "sleeping it off" can kill. Know the overdose signs (confusion, can't stay awake, vomiting, slow or irregular breathing, cold or bluish skin), and if you see even one, call 911 and stay. Never mix alcohol with sleep, anxiety or opioid medicines.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ 911 and a trusted ride saved in your phone ☐ A plan with friends before you go out

WHAT TO KNOW

- 1 **Know what one drink is.** In the U.S., a standard drink has 14 grams of pure alcohol: 12 ounces of regular beer (about 5%), 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of liquor. A 12-ounce beer at 10% is two drinks, and many light beers have about 85% as much alcohol as regular beer.
- 2 **Know what binge drinking is: reaching a blood alcohol level of 0.08% or more, typically about 5 or more drinks for men or 4 or more for women in about two hours.** High-intensity drinking is twice that or more, and teens and college-age young adults often do both.
- 3 **Know the overdose signs: confusion or stupor; trouble staying conscious or can't be woken up; vomiting; seizures; slow breathing (fewer than 8 breaths a minute) or irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths); slow heart rate; clammy skin; no gag reflex; very low body temperature, bluish skin or paleness.**
- 4 **Call 911 right away if you suspect an overdose.** Don't wait for every symptom, and remember a person who has passed out can die.
- 5 **Stay with them.** Keep them sitting on the ground or partly upright, not in a chair. If they're vomiting, have them lean forward. If they're passed out or lying down, roll them onto one side, ear toward the ground.
- 6 **Tell responders what they drank and how much, any other drugs they took, and any medications, allergies or health conditions you know of.**

Watch out Blood alcohol can keep rising after someone stops drinking or passes out, because alcohol still in the stomach keeps entering the blood. At very high levels the gag reflex can stop working, and a person can choke on vomit. Cold showers, hot coffee and walking don't reverse an overdose and can make it worse.

DAD NOTE *If you're not sure whether to call 911, call. I'd rather you call for nothing than not call.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/body/substances-the-facts/alcohol-knowing-the-facts/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; RAINN.