ALCOHOL AND THE BODY

April is Alcohol Awareness month. It's the perfect time to learn the facts and think about your choices. When you drink alcohol, it passes quickly into your bloodstream and travels to every part of your body. The effect on your body depends on your age, sex, weight, tolerance, and the type of alcohol.

AGE

As you get older, it takes longer for the body to break down alcohol, so it stays in your system longer. Excessive drinking compromises your immune system. Both age and alcohol consumption increase your risk of developing a chronic illness.

WEIGHT

The less you weigh, the more you will be affected by the consumption of alcohol because a lower body weight makes for a higher concentration of alcohol in the body.

WOMEN

Because alcohol is primarily stored in water in the body, and women carry less water in their bodies than men, women produce less of the enzyme (ADH) that breaks down alcohol. Because a woman's body doesn't break down alcohol as efficiently, her blood alcohol content (BAC) level will be higher than the BAC of a man who has had the same number of drinks.

TOLERANCE

Tolerance is a decreased sensitivity to alcohol. The degree of impairment depends on: how much (quantity), how often (frequency), how long (time), and how potent (strength). Each person is born with a different tolerance level. High tolerance tricks the brain into thinking it is functioning normally even though a high quantity of alcohol has been consumed. It also may trick you into making other high-risk choices.

KNOW YOUR CHOICES

NON-DRINKER

One way to protect what you've earned is to simply choose not to drink.

LOW-RISK DRINKER

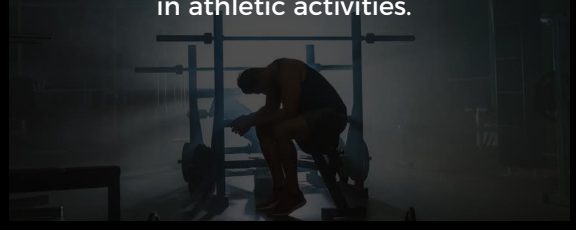
Risk is related to the amount and how often alcohol is consumed. Low-risk drinking means no more than one standard drink an hour, no more than three on any day (two for women), and no more than fourteen in a week.

HIGH-RISK DRINKER

Drinking more than the suggested amounts and frequency places you at higher risk for heart disease, stroke, cancer, liver disease, high blood pressure, memory and learning problems, and accidental injuries.

PHYSICAL FITNESS AND ALCOHOL

Alcohol negatively impacts coordination, cognitive precision, reaction times, balance, and hand-eye coordination. Alcohol may also slow respiratory function, making it difficult to regulate body temperature, increasing the risk of dehydration. The result is a significant decrease in reaction abilities, both physical and mental, critical in athletic activities.



STANDARD DRINK BY QUANTITY

BEER
12 OUNCES

WINE
5 OUNCES

LIQUOR
1.5 OUNCES

**Remember to adjust your quantity when consuming drinks with higher alcohol by volume (ABV).*

To learn more about alcohol or how to make low-risk choices, contact your installation's Substance Assessment Counselling Center SACC).

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