



Alcohol Poisoning Fact Sheet

Did You Know?

There are many common myths about sobering up: drinking black coffee, taking a cold shower, sleeping it off...the only thing however, that reverses the effects of alcohol is **time**. Many different factors affect an individual's level of intoxication, so it is often difficult to gauge exactly how much is too much for any one person.

Alcohol depresses nerves that control involuntary actions, such as breathing and the gag reflex (which prevents choking). A fatal dose of alcohol will eventually stop these functions. Additionally, it is common for someone who drank excessively to vomit, since alcohol is an irritant to the stomach. If the person is unconscious, there is then the danger of him/her choking on vomit, which could cause death by asphyxiation. You should also know that a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) can continue to rise even while he or she is passed out. Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. It is dangerous to assume the person will be fine by sleeping it off.

Critical Signs and Symptoms of Alcohol Poisoning

- Mental confusion, stupor, coma, or person cannot be woken up
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- Hypothermia (low body temperature) bluish skin color, or paleness

What to Do if You Suspect Someone Has Alcohol Poisoning

- Know the danger signals.
- Don't wait for all of the symptoms to be present.
- Be aware that a person who has passed out may be seriously injured or die.
- Call 9-1-1 for help if there is **any** suspicion of an alcohol overdose.

What Can Happen if Alcohol Poisoning Goes Untreated?

- Victim chokes on his or her own vomit.
- Breathing slows, becomes irregular, or stops.
- Heart beats irregularly or stops.
- Hypothermia (low body temperature).
- Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar) leads to seizures.
- Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage or death.

There is nothing more important than someone's life. Not your chapter, your reputation, or your status with the University. If concerned, CALL FOR HELP.