

Alcohol

How does it make you feel?

Just enough can make you feel sociable; too much and you'll have a hangover the next day, and may not even remember what you got up to; and way too much alcohol in a single session could put you in a coma or even kill you.

Although it's legal for people aged 18 and over to buy and drink alcohol, that doesn't mean it's safe.

Some effects include: Reduced feelings of anxiety and inhibitions, which can help you feel more sociable. An exaggeration of whatever mood you're in when you start drinking.

Drinking a lot of alcohol (more than 6-8 units) will make you intoxicated (drunk), which will show itself as increasingly: slurred speech; lack of co-ordination and blurred vision.

Alcohol raises testosterone levels in males and females, which affects both sexual drive and aggression.

The more you drink in one session, the more your judgement will be affected, and this can lead to doing things or taking risks that you otherwise wouldn't.

Duration

How long the effects last and the drug stays in your system depends on how much you've taken, your size and what other drugs you may have also taken.

How quickly you feel the effects and how long they last, depend on how much you've taken and how quickly, your size, whether you've eaten and any other drugs you may have also taken.

Alcohol is broken down by the liver into other compounds at the rate of about 1 unit per hour. Only the liver breaks down alcohol in the body and nothing else, such as drinking coffee or caffeine drinks, will speed that process up, though you may feel more alert.

The short-term effects of alcohol can last for a day or two, depending on how much you drank, including any hangover.

Alcohol and the compounds that alcohol is broken down into by your liver are poisonous and although they are eventually excreted from the system, they have a potentially damaging effect on almost every system of the body, which can result in health damage over time.

Physical health risks

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Drinking alcohol causes a wide range of physical and mental health problems, either because of binge drinking or from regularly drinking more than 14 units per week.

Binge drinking (more than 14 units per week- about 2 bottles of wine or 7 pints of beer) can lead to injuries from falls, accidents or assaults. Drinking above the low risk guidelines on a regular basis can cause illnesses such as depression, high blood pressure, stroke, liver disease, cancers of the throat, mouth breast and liver.

Long-term effects include damage to the brain, body and its organs. This can take years to develop and can lead to a wide range of serious health problems, like cancers, that you may not realise are due to alcohol.

Other chemical forms of alcohol, such as methanol (meths), Isopropanol and butanol, are much more toxic than ethanol and should not be consumed by humans.