

PARTYING AND GETTING DRUNK

SMASHED
LOADED
HAMMERED
WASTED

What we're talking about here is drinking a lot of alcohol quickly—on a night out with friends at a party or bar, in a drinking game or contest, or just drinking too much because you want to get drunk. This is known as binge drinking.

WHAT IS BINGE DRINKING?

Researchers define binge drinking as having many drinks on one occasion: five or more drinks for a male, or four or more drinks for a female. A standard drink is defined as:



341 mL (12 oz.)
beer, cider or
cooler
(5% alcohol)



142 mL (5 oz.)
wine
(12% alcohol)



85 mL (3 oz.)
fortified wine
(18% alcohol)



43 mL (1.5 oz.)
liquor
(40% alcohol)

Young people who binge drink are especially at risk. This is because they are less familiar with the effects of alcohol, and are more likely to do something impulsive or dangerous. Binge drinking is also more common among young people. Recent surveys show that:

- one-fifth (20%) of Ontario students in grades 7–12 report binge drinking at least once in the past month
- almost one in three (32%) Canadians between 20 and 34 years report binge drinking 12 or more times in the past year
- nearly one in five (19%) of Canadians between 35 and 44 years report binge drinking at this same rate.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU BINGE DRINK?

When you binge drink, you get intoxicated, or drunk. This is because you drink faster than your body can eliminate the alcohol. It takes more than an hour for your body to process one standard drink of alcohol. This rate is constant, no matter how much you drink. The only way to get sober is to stop drinking, and to wait.

Intoxication affects your judgment, your attitude, your behaviour and your reflexes. People do all kinds of things when they are drunk that they would never dream of doing when they are sober. People are less inhibited, sensitive and aware and more reckless and careless when they are intoxicated. They often do things that seem stupid, dangerous, embarrassing or even shameful to them once they have sobered up.

RISKS OF BINGE DRINKING

When you binge drink, your risk of many safety and health problems increases. These include:

- misjudging a situation or what is being said
- getting into a fight or being assaulted
- having unwanted sex or pushing unwanted sex on others
- developing or worsening depression, anxiety and other mental health problems
- having blackouts (when you lose all memory of where you were and what you did when you were drunk)
- getting a hangover (headache, shaking, vomiting)
- seeing suicide as a way out when you are feeling down
- getting injured or killed while driving, biking, boating, snowmobiling, walking or being a passenger
- getting injured or killed from a fall, drowning or fire
- getting sick and possibly dying from alcohol poisoning
- choking on your own vomit (which can kill you if you are passed out)
- going into respiratory arrest (meaning you stop breathing).

Over a longer term, repeated binge drinking can also increase the risk of:

- damage to your stomach, pancreas, liver and brain
- developing cancer
- developing an addiction to alcohol.

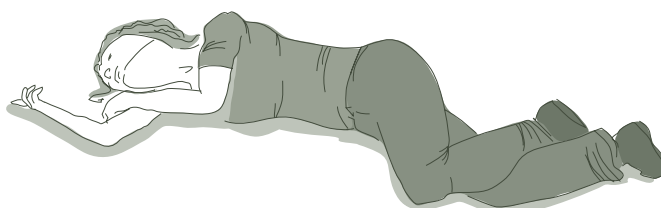
Binge drinking also increases your risk of arrest and other legal problems.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING?

Alcohol poisoning, caused by too much alcohol, is extremely dangerous and can cause coma and death.

Signs include:

- disorientation or confusion
- passing out, not being able to be woken up
- slow, irregular breathing
- bluish or pale, cold, clammy skin
- slowed heart rate
- vomiting while passed out.



WHAT DO I DO?

When someone is passed out from alcohol poisoning:

- gently roll the person on his or her side, tilting the head back and tucking the top hand under the chin to keep the mouth open and the airway clear. This helps to reduce the risk of choking if the person vomits. Bend the person's top leg and bottom arm to support this position
- do not leave the person alone
- call 911 if you cannot wake the person, especially if he or she is vomiting or has vomited.

HOW CAN I BE SAFER WHEN I DRINK?

When you know you will be drinking, plan ahead, stay in control and stay safe!

Try these tips:

1. Pace yourself by alternating alcoholic drinks with soft drinks or water. Eat before you drink and while you are drinking.
2. Know your limit. Keep below it. Don't let others push you beyond it.
3. Drink slowly. Don't chug. No one will be impressed by how fast you can drink when you're clinging to the toilet.
4. Stop drinking before you feel drunk.
5. Don't mix alcohol with medicines, illegal drugs or energy drinks. Other drugs may interact with alcohol, causing effects you don't expect or are unable to control.
6. Count your drinks. Ways to keep track include keeping your bottle caps in your pocket.
7. Think about your reputation, your safety and the safety of others.
8. Watch your drink so that no one can slip anything into it when you're not looking.
9. Plan ahead. Arrange to walk, take a taxi or public transit home with a sober buddy; get someone you can trust to pick you up; or stay overnight where you will be drinking.
10. If you drink any alcohol, do not drive. The only way to know whether the level of alcohol in your body is within the legal limit for driving is a breathalyzer or blood test. You can't tell by the way you feel. Just as important, don't ride with a driver who has been drinking.

WHAT CAN I DO IF I WANT TO STOP DRINKING, BUT CAN'T?

If your drinking is causing problems in your life and you want to stop, but can't, ask for help. Tell your friends and family members you want to cut down or stop drinking, and ask them for their

support. Ask them to help you organize activities that don't involve drinking. If your drinking continues to cause problems for you, call one of these organizations for help:

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health

(CAMH) intake:

416 535-8501 ext. 6616

1 800 463-2338 ext. 6616

Drug & Alcohol Helpline

Ontario:

1 800 565-8603

Kids Help Phone:

1 800 668-6868

Metro Addiction Assessment Referral Service

(MAARS):

416 599-1448 (in Toronto)

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