

Just a few drinks—less even than it takes to feel drunk—can reduce the judgment and coordination needed to drive safely.



■ Hidden Costs

So if a person drinks once in a while to relax, is that a problem? Probably not, but it can turn into problems down the road or, for that matter, **on** the road.

For one thing, people who drink to relax can start to rely on alcohol. After a while, it can be tough to chill out without it. That can lead to more drinking—and more stuff to worry about.

And just a few drinks—less, even, than it takes for someone to feel drunk—can reduce the judgment skills and coordination needed to drive safely. That's why it's a good idea to learn other ways to have fun and feel good. That way, *you* get to be the one in control of your life, not alcohol.

Still, lots of people drink, but only some have problems. Does that mean it's basically safe for others?

Not necessarily—because there *are* other things besides alcoholism to think about. For starters, drinking can cause **big-time** health problems, including liver disease and several kinds of cancer.

And there are other risks, too—personal ones.

When people drink, sometimes they say things they shouldn't or that they don't really mean.

Or they can do things they normally wouldn't do, and hurt the people they care about most—or themselves.

And those are just some of the hidden costs of drinking. And they all cost a lot more than money.

Funny that no one ever talks about this stuff in beer commercials. Maybe it's because the reality isn't funny, at all.



■ Here's Looking at You, Kid

There are a lot of reasons people have for drinking: to relax, to be sociable, to have a good time, to be cool.

And if you pay attention to even half the commercials on TV (and they spend billions of advertising dollars every year betting that you do), you've already seen more reasons than you'll ever need.

But when you stop and think about it, there's one really good reason for not drinking, and nobody talks about it much.

That's too bad, because it makes more sense than all the beer-brained frogs and all the slogans put together: Because drinking can take away the power you need to make things happen in your life. Cool things. Magical things.

Think about it.

And the next time you see a slick, funny beer commercial on TV, ask yourself: If booze is so great, why do they have to work so hard to sell it?



Alcohol

What's in it for you?



► News and Views to Peruse
When You Choose about Booze
(& Whether to Use or Refuse)

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In updating a study of heavy drinkers from the late 1960's, researchers found that almost half the women and 60% of men in the earlier study had died. They estimated that some had died 20 years prematurely because of their drinking. Source: UPI.

■ Wazzup?

Just turn on the TV. Beer commercials practically jump off the screen: Here's Frankie and Louie, eyeballing some frogs, who are busy croaking out the name of their favorite beer. Why, one just caught a beer truck with its tongue.

Okay, but what's he going to do with it?

Turn the channel. Here's a bored-looking dude, checking out his own tube. The phone rings, and you know what's up the rest of the way out: "Wazzupppp?"

And here's a blast from the past: A couple of ex-jocks arguing about whether their beer tastes great or is less filling. Hmmm.

It's not that the ads aren't fun—or funny. It's just that between the lines and under their breath, they say something that's not totally true:

"Drinking's cool. Trust us."

What they *don't* say is important, too: Alcohol is a drug, and it can be dangerous, even deadly.

A look at the numbers proves it: About 16 million Americans have drinking problems. And tens of thousands die each year from alcohol-related accidents and diseases.

One reason why is that a lot of people just don't understand what alcohol is and how it affects the mind and body.

That's why we put together this pamphlet.

In it, we'll discuss what alcohol is and explain how it works. We'll also talk about some of the problems it can cause and suggest ways to avoid those problems.

Because real life is different than TV commercials. In real life, people can get **messed up** by alcohol.

Maybe TV frogs and lizards don't, but real people do.

■ Booze Basics

Basically, booze is as simple as 1-2-3. In fact, you could even say that:

- 1 (you, for example) should probably start
- 2 learn about alcohol by considering its
- 3 main forms—beer, wine, and liquor.



Hype Happy: No matter what the ads imply, most drinkers drink for one reason: to feel the drug effects of alcohol.



Maybe in TV-Land, frogs and lizards don't end up wasted on booze, but in the real world, a lot of real people sure do.



- ▶ **Beer** is brewed from grain, with malt, yeast, and hops thrown in for bubbles and bounce. It contains 3-6% alcohol.
- ▶ **Wine** is made from fermented grapes and other fruits. It contains 7-14% alcohol.
- ▶ **Liquor** (whiskey, gin, rum, or vodka), is made from distilled grains, and contains about 40% alcohol.

Even though many people think that some forms of alcohol are worse than others, the fact is that they all deliver about the same amount of pure alcohol per drink.

That means that an ounce-and-a-half shot of whiskey contains about the same amount of alcohol as a five-ounce glass of wine or a 12-ounce bottle of beer.

Beer and wine just contain more water, that's all.

■ Pick Your Poison

The drug present in all the different types of alcohol is called **ethanol**, or ethyl alcohol.

It's a poison in large doses, but causes feelings of relaxation and excitement at smaller doses.

Still, since it **is** a poison, it can cause serious problems.

How, exactly? Let's take a look...

When someone drinks, alcohol goes straight to the stomach, where it's absorbed into the bloodstream and pumped to the brain and other parts of the body.

After triggering drug effects in the brain and side effects everywhere else, ethanol is transported to the body organs that break it down and eliminate

it from the body.

Although the kidneys and lungs help in this process, the real work gets done by the liver, which is able to process about a half-ounce of pure alcohol every hour.

That's not bad, considering how poisonous ethanol actually is. The problem is that it isn't fast enough.

That's why drinkers who suck it down faster than the liver can burn it up begin to feel the *toxic* (or poisonous) effects of alcohol.

The fancy name for this process is **intoxication**.

The everyday word for it is getting *drunk*.

There are a lot of other words for it, too, and we've all heard most of them—words like blasted, blotto, polluted, stupid, and wasted.

Hey, notice any common **themes** here, or what?



Glass Act: A five-ounce glass of wine, a can of beer, and a shot of whiskey each contain about the same total amount of alcohol.

■ Alcohol, the Drug

Ethanol is a member of the drug group known as **depressants**, because it *depresses* (or slows down) the brain and nervous system.

When a person drinks more than the liver can filter, the excess alcohol can start to seriously depress the drinker's brain and central nervous system.

That's about the time when he or she starts to lose control.

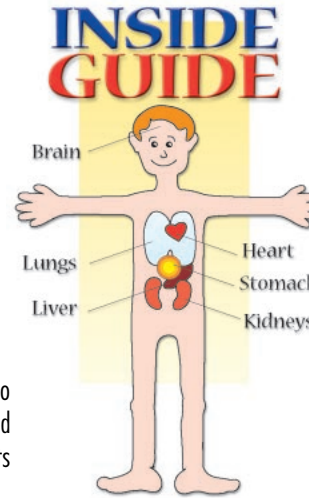
You can hear it in the drinker's voice and see it reflected in behavior as alcohol alters speech, coordination, and mood.

Usually, that's where things start and end—or where they start to end, at least.

The full story isn't over until all the alcohol is metabolized and eliminated from the body, and all body systems swing back to normal.

That usually takes about 24 hours—but it can **seem** a lot longer to a person with a hangover.

Time only flies when you're having fun.



How it goes. Booze zips from the stomach to the brain and other organs. Eventually (say, a headache and upset stomach later), it's eliminated by the liver, kidneys, and lungs.