



The UCSB Alcohol and Drug Program acknowledges that abstinence from alcohol is the only no-risk alternative and the only legal option for those under 21 years of age.

At the same time, the program believes that underage college students who choose to drink should learn to do so with the least risk and harm possible.

## What kind of substance is alcohol?

Alcohol is classified as a depressant because it slows down the central nervous system, causing a decrease in motor coordination, reaction time and intellectual performance. At high doses, the respiratory system slows down drastically and can cause a coma or death.

### What we see at UCSB:

- Alcohol is the "drug of choice" in college.
- About 20% of UCSB students report abstaining from substance use so approximately half of our students either don't drink or choose to drink in moderation when they do drink.
- High risk drinking puts students at greater risk for negative consequences such as blackouts, injuries, driving under the influence, diminished academic performance, sexual assault, and unplanned and unprotected sex.

## Why do people drink?

A group of students were asked this question as part of a national college alcohol study in 2001. Among the students who drink, here are the most common responses:

- To have a good time with friends – 91%
- To celebrate – 90%
- To relax or relieve tension – 74%
- Because they like the taste – 69%

Not surprisingly, no one who chooses to drink intends to get arrested or end up in the emergency room. Most people enjoy drinking because of the pleasant effects that occur within the first few drinks. So if you choose to drink, know your limits, trust your surroundings and be educated about the risks involved in any kind of substance use.

**Consider how often things happen that you DON'T intend and then ask yourself what you can do to make safer choices!!**

## How does alcohol move through the body?

Once swallowed, a drink enters the stomach and small intestine, where small blood vessels carry it to the bloodstream. Approximately 20% of alcohol is absorbed through the stomach and most of the remaining 80% is absorbed through the small intestine.

Alcohol is metabolized by the liver, where enzymes break down the alcohol. In general, the liver can process one ounce of liquor (or one standard drink) in one hour. If you consume more than this, your system becomes saturated, and the additional alcohol will accumulate in the blood and body tissues until it can be metabolized. Very small amounts of alcohol are excreted via lungs, sweat and urine (2-5%). This is why pounding shots or playing drinking games can result in high blood alcohol concentrations that last for several hours.

## What are some common effects of drinking alcohol?

Alcohol may: \*\*

- Cause mood swings.
- Make you less patient.