



ALCOHOL AND ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

I turned 21 last month and have started going out for drinks and a good time with some of my teammates. While I enjoy socializing, I wonder if drinking is affecting my performance. Before I started drinking, I didn't notice problems with stamina. Now, I become winded easily and am more prone to muscle cramps.

Could alcohol be affecting my game?

NUTRITION GOALS

- Fully rehydrate and refuel post-exercise before considering drinking alcohol.
- Maintain a social life without compromising training and competition goals.
- When choosing alcohol, follow the guidelines of moderation: one to two drinks per day for men, one drink per day for women. One “drink” equals 12 ounces of regular beer (150 calories), 5 ounces of wine (100 calories), or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor (100 calories).

(For the consequences of alcohol on performance and tips for social situations, turn the page.)



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CONSEQUENCES OF ALCOHOL USE ON ATHLETIC PERFORMANCE

- **Decreases aerobic performance.** Alcohol is a diuretic that can lead to dehydration. It also impairs temperature regulation and accelerates fatigue.
- **Impairs motor skills and decreases strength, power and sprint performance.** Alcohol slows reaction time and impairs precision, equilibrium, hand-eye coordination, accuracy, balance, judgment, information processing, focus, stamina, strength, power and speed for up to 72 hours (three days).
- **Slows recovery.** Alcohol can interfere with recovery by delaying muscle repair.
- **Negatively affects body composition.** Drinking could lead to increased body fat accumulation due to ethanol storage as fat. Alcohol's stimulant effect can also result in increased caloric intake and, therefore, overall weight gain.

- **Increases the risk for nutrient deficiencies.** Not only does alcohol decrease vitamin and mineral absorption, but also certain nutrients are used to help clear alcohol out of your system, leaving less of those nutrients available for normal function.
- **Increases risk of illness and injury.** Regular alcohol consumption depresses immune function and contributes to delayed healing.
- **Disrupts sleep.** Alcohol can interfere with sleep patterns by reducing time spent in deep, restful sleep.



TIPS TO TAKE WITH YOU

If you choose to drink alcohol, the following tips may assist you in managing alcohol intake when out with friends and teammates. Remember, you need to control your own intake.

- **Plan ahead.** Think about where you are going, who you will be with and how much you are going to drink. Also, plan ahead how you are going to get home.
- **Share your goals.** Discuss your training goals with friends, ask them to support your decision to limit alcohol, and engage in social activities that do not include alcohol.
- **Eat before or while you are drinking.** Eating carbohydrate-rich foods after exercise helps replenish muscle fuel stores. Having food in your system slows down the rate at which alcohol can be absorbed into the blood stream. Eating while drinking also slows down your drinking pace and fills you up. This does not mean you can keep drinking as long as you are eating.
- **Pace yourself.** If you do decide to have a drink, alternate alcoholic beverages with non-alcoholic ones. Start with a water, juice or soda. You will drink much faster if you are thirsty, so having a non-alcoholic drink to quench your thirst before you start drinking alcohol is a good idea. Drink slowly, take sips rather than gulps and put your glass down between sips.
- **Be the designated driver.** If you have made the decision not to drink and are worried that there might be pressure from your friends or teammates to "have a few," let them know that you are the designated driver. They should respect that decision ... and it will save them money in cab fares.



- **Drink one drink at a time.** Do not let others top off your drink if you have not finished it. It is more difficult to keep track of how much you've had to drink if you do.
- **Stay social.** Dance, play pool, mingle; don't just sit and drink. If you're active, you tend to drink less.
- **Avoid rounds.** Drinking a round with friends encourages you to drink at someone else's pace. If you do get stuck in this situation, buy a non-alcoholic drink for yourself when it is your turn.
- **Look out for each other.** Watch out for your friends and teammates, and let them know if you've had too much to drink.
- **End the evening with water.** One of the best ways to prevent a hangover is to rehydrate. Make sure you drink plenty of water before you go to sleep.