



THE UNITED STATES OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

Alcohol and the Athlete

Alcohol impairs athletic performance physiologically, mentally, and physically, extending beyond the night of drinking. Understanding the consequences of excessive drinking and being mindful of your alcohol consumption can help keep you and your teammates healthy, happy, and safe!



How does it affect performance?

Alcohol impairs your ability to regulate body temperature and also has a diuretic effect, leading to dehydration. In combination with the effects listed below, research has shown that alcohol can decrease performance by as much as 11.4% the day after drinking. The negative effects of alcohol consumption on performance can last for up to 72 hours!

- **In the brain**, it impairs motor skills like balance, coordination, and reaction time.
- **In muscle**, impaired blood flow reduces muscle strength. The prevalence of musculoskeletal injury is 30% higher in athletes who drink versus those who do not.
- **In the liver**, all processes shut down to prioritize alcohol metabolism. This causes low blood sugar and impairs the use of fat as fuel, inhibiting positive training adaptations.
- **In the heart**, cardiovascular function is disturbed (especially during a hangover), increasing heart rate, perceived exertion, and blood pressure while decreasing the ability of the heart to pump blood to other parts of the body.
- **Hormonally**, testosterone decreases and estrogen increases, causing fluid retention and fat deposition that can lead to weight gain. Low testosterone also impairs the ability to increase muscle mass and strength.

How much is too much?

- Women: >2 drinks per day
- Men: >3 drinks per day
- Excessive or “binge” drink = >2 drinks in 2 hours

There is NO BENEFICIAL EFFECT of alcohol on sport performance. It is best to avoid alcohol within 48 hours of activity or competition.

Tips for Surviving a Night on the Town

- **Plan in advance:** Think about where you're going, who you're with, and what you need to do tomorrow.
- **Eat before or while you are drinking:** Eating slows alcohol absorption and your rate of drinking. It is also essential for recovery and replenishment of muscle energy stores after training or competition.
- **Pace yourself:** Space out your alcoholic drinks with non-alcoholic drinks in between; this will help you to drink slower and stay hydrated (especially if you exercised, competed, or practiced on the same day)
- **Drink slowly:** Sip, don't gulp! Put your glass down in-between sips.
- **Select low alcohol drinks:** Choose lower alcohol beers such as pilsner or light beer; have spirits mixed with juice or soda water and ask for it in a "tall glass" with just one shot.
- **One drink at a time:** Don't let others top off your drink before you finish; it will be harder to keep track of.
- **Keep yourself busy:** If you're occupied, you tend to drink less. Dance, play some pool or other games; try not to just sit around and drink.
- **Avoid shots:** Taking shots with others forces you to drink at their pace. If you get stuck in this situation, politely refrain or ask the bartender to pour water in yours.
- **Do not leave your drink unattended:** It is not uncommon for drinks to be "spiked" with other drugs. Always keep an eye on your drink, and do not accept random beverages from strangers.
- **Look out for your friends and teammates:** If you were in a similar situation, you would expect them to look out for you! Do not be afraid to let them know they have had too much.
- **NEVER, EVER, EVER DRINK AND DRIVE!!!** Do not wait until the end of the night; designate a non-drinking driver before you leave the house, or take a taxi.

COMMON DRINKS	CALORIES
Regular Beer 5% alcohol (12 oz)	140
Light Beer 4.2% alcohol (12 oz)	110
Red Wine (4 oz)	80
White Wine (4 oz)	75
1 Shot (80 proof alcohol)	100
Vodka or Tequila Shot	105
Jager Bomb	205
Mojito (4 oz)	160
Pina Colada (4 oz)	240
Daiquiri (w/ 2 oz rum)	140
Long Island Regular Coke	270
Long Island Diet Coke	235
Mai Tai (with 2 oz. Of Rum)	290
Margarita	160
Vodka Tonic (w/ 1 shot)	165
Vodka Soda (w/ 1 shot)	100
Martini	140
Rum & Coke	160
Red bull & Vodka	210
Sugar Free Red bull & Vodka	105
Hard Cider	190

If I drink alcohol, I usually have:

drinks per night: _____

nights per week/month: _____

Estimated calories: _____

Athlete Recommendations:

