**Alcohol Fact Sheet**

**Alcohol:** **Ethyl Alcohol** is the type used in the production of alcoholic beverages. The other three types of alcohol, Methyl, Propyl and Butyl Alcohol, if consumed can result in blindness and death - even in relatively small doses. Alcohol is a central nervous system depressant, rapidly absorbed from the stomach and small intestine into the blood stream shortly after ingestion [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com). **Alcohol effects** include changes in behavior, impair judgment and coordination, induce relaxation, and suppress anxiety, and give social confidence.

**Consumption and social impact of alcohol consumption in WI**

Alcohol is part of our culture in Wisconsin—it helps us celebrate and socialize, and it enhances our religious ceremonies. It is part of our eating, drinking, partying, sports celebrations, school and college events, and important life events like anniversaries, weddings, graduations, ethnic celebrations. Many bars and heavy drinking are norms.

**Wisconsin:** 5th OWI to make a felony with .o8 for a blood alcohol level

23.4% of people engaged in binge drinking in the last month (2007)

3rd lowest beer tax in the nation at $0.065

41.4% fatal accidents had drivers with alcohol levels of over .08% (2007)

Is 1 of 12 states that does not allow sobriety checkpoints (2007)

<http://www.jsonline.com/news/30565984.html> for Wisconsin statistics

**A “standard” drink** can help you determine how much you are drinking and understand the risks. One standard drink contains about 0.6 fluid ounces or 14 grams of pure alcohol.

* **12 fluid ounces of beer (about 5% alcohol)**
* **8 to 9 fluid ounces of malt liquor (about 7% alcohol)**
* **5 fluid ounces of table wine (about 12% alcohol)**
* **1.5 fluid ounces of hard liquor (about 40% alcohol)**

Body size, sex, weight, and age, and if you are taking medications are also factors. For some, no amount of alcohol is safe to take in. It is highly addictive and, as tolerance level increases, control decreases. <http://www.womensheart.org/content/heartdisease/alcohol_and_heart_disease.asp>

**Physiological effects from the ABUSE of alcohol:**

**Heavy alcohol consumption** can cause neurotransmitters to relay information too slowly, inducing drowsiness. Alcohol-related disruptions to the neurotransmitter balance also can trigger mood and behavioral changes, including depression, agitation, memory loss, and seizures.

**Long-term, heavy drinking** causes alterations in the neurons, such as reductions in the size of brain cells. Brain mass shrinks and may affect motor coordination; temperature regulation; sleep; mood; and various cognitive functions, including learning and memory. Neurotransmitters adapt to create balance in the brain despite the presence of alcohol. But making these adaptations can have negative results, including building alcohol tolerance, developing alcohol dependence, and experiencing alcohol withdrawal symptoms <http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Hangovers/beyondHangovers.htm#chapter01>

**Signs and symptoms of alcohol DEPENDENCE:**

The disease model is the medically accepted terminology for alcohol dependence, and it notes that brain enzymes and the alterations of neurotransmitters such as dopamine and serotonin are significantly impaired from chronic alcohol [www.livestrong.com](http://www.livestrong.com).

* **Craving**-the strong need or urge to drink
* **Loss of control**-not being able to stop drinking once started
* **Physical dependence**-withdrawal symptoms including nausea, sweating, anxiety, shakiness,
* **Tolerance**-needing to drink higher amounts of alcohol to get desired effect

For clinical and research purposes, formal diagnostic criteria for alcoholism also have been developed. Such criteria are included in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition*, published by the [American Psychiatric Association](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=32503), as well as in the *International Classification Diseases*, published by the [World Health Organization](http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=11087)

<http://www.medicinenet.com/alcohol_abuse_and_alcoholism/article.htm>

**Withdrawal effects from alcohol:** Withdrawal symptoms can be life-threatening and include severe anxiety, tremors, shaking, increased blood pressure and vomiting, hallucinations, and convulsions. Less severe withdrawal effects are sleeping disturbances, agitation, and restlessness.

**Short term health risks:**

* Alcohol can be lethal if the amount of alcohol reaches a concentration above 460 milligrams of alcohol per 100 milliliters of blood. When the amount of alcohol in the blood is too high, death from respiratory depression can occur <http://www.drugs.com/alcohol.html>.
* Decreased inhibitions, behaviors, engaging in risky behaviors, leading to pregnancy, diseases, domestic violence
* Slower motor activity, reflexes, depressant. accidents
* May cause drowsiness, sleep, also may lead to accidents
* Teenage deaths, including drowning, suicides and homicides

[www.mayoclinic.com](http://www.mayoclinic.com)

**Long term health risks:** problems caused by excessive drinking

* Alcoholic hepatitis or liver inflammation, or cirrhosis of the liver
* Heart problems, arrhythmia, congestive heart failure, and high blood pressure
* Neurological complication which effect the nervous system, thinking, dementia, and short term memory loss
* Digestive problems, gastritis, vitamin absorption, pancreas
* Diabetes complications, hypoglycemia
* Increased risk of cancers
* Sexual function in men and women
* Birth defects, fetal alcohol syndrome
* Long-term heavy use of alcohol destroys the cerebellum of the brain, causing irreversible brain damage and resulting in slowed thinking, an unsteady walk and slurred speech [www.womensheart.org](http://www.womensheart.org)

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alcoholism/DS00340/METHOD=print&DSECTION=all>

**Fetal alcohol spectrum disorders** are physical, learning, and behavioral problems and other birth defects and are the leading preventable birth defect associated with mental and behavioral impairment in the United States. The most serious of these disorders, **fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS),** is characterized by abnormal facial features and is usually associated with severe reductions in brain function and overall growth. The brains of children with FAS are smaller than normal and contain fewer cells, including neurons

<http://pubs.niaaa.nih.gov/publications/Hangovers/beyondHangovers.htm>

**Fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS)** is a condition that results from prenatal alcohol exposure that has lifelong effects on the child. As many as 40,000 babies are born with some type of alcohol-related damage each year in the United States.

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fetal-alcohol-syndrome/DS00184>

* ***Infants:*** low birth weight; irritability; sensitivity to light, noises and touch; poor sucking; slow development; poor sleep-wake cycles; increased ear infections.
* ***Toddlers:*** poor memory capability, hyperactivity, lack of fear, no sense of boundaries and a need for excessive physical contact.
* ***Grade-school years:*** short attention span, poor coordination and difficulty with both fine and gross motor skills.
* ***Older children:*** trouble keeping up with school, low self-esteem from recognizing they are different from their peers.
* ***Teenagers:*** poor impulse control, cannot distinguish between public and private behaviors, must be reminded of concepts on a daily basis.
* ***Adults:*** need to deal with many daily obstacles, such as affordable and appropriate housing, transportation, employment and money handling. <http://www.nofas.org/living/strategy.aspx>

**References**

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