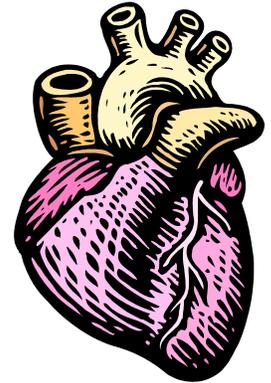


Alcohol - Effects on the Body

The Heart

Excessive alcohol consumption can cause vitamin deficiencies in the heart; when this occurs the pumping action of the heart is weakened, which can result in heart failure. This weakening of the heart muscle and its ability to pump is called Cardiomyopathy (Cardio = heart; myo = muscle; pathy = disease). Excessive alcohol consumption can also cause heart enlargement and irregular heart beat. Furthermore, it increases blood pressure, risk of heart attack and strokes and inhibits the production of white and red blood cells. White blood cells fight off illness.



The Liver

The liver is one of the body's most important filters. When a person drinks alcohol excessively, some of the most serious effects on the body are caused by damage done to the liver. If alcohol is frequently in the blood in large amounts, it causes the liver cells to die and prevents the liver from working efficiently - this is called Cirrhosis. In the case of a generally healthy person, if alcohol is taken infrequently or only in moderate amounts, any damaged liver tissue has time to repair itself. Chronic heavy drinking may cause alcoholic hepatitis (inflammation and destruction of the liver cells). It also impairs the liver's ability to remove waste resulting in yellow pigment of the skin (Jaundice). Liver damage causes fluid to build up in the extremities (Edema); also decreases in the production of blood-clotting factors may cause uncontrolled bleeding. The liver accumulates fat which can cause liver failure, coma and death.

The Stomach

Just one session of heavy alcohol consumption can irritate the stomach and cause sickness and pain. The steady drinking of alcohol can lead to the regular occurrence of these symptoms. Alcohol can irritate the stomach lining, cause peptic ulcers, inflammation, lesions and cancer.



Pancreas

Alcohol drinkers have a significant risk of pancreatitis, a chronic inflammation of the pancreas. The pancreas produces important hormones and digestive enzymes.

Intestines

Drinking alcoholic beverages causes irritation of the lining of the intestinal tract and colon. Chronic drinking may result in inflammation, ulcers and cancer of the intestines and colon. Nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, sweating and loss of appetite are common. Alcohol impairs the small intestine's ability to process nutrients and vitamins.

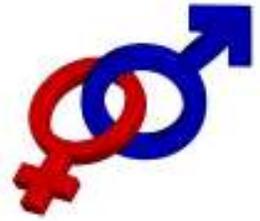
EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL

The Skin

Alcohol causes small blood vessels in the skin to widen, allowing more blood to flow close to the skin's surface; this produces a flushed skin color and a feeling of warmth.

The Reproductive Organs

A person's sex life can be harmed by drinking alcoholic beverages. Alcohol depresses nerve impulses. In men, it can depress those which cause erections. Sexual functioning can also be impaired and deteriorate, resulting in impotence and infertility (sometimes irreversible). Females also have high risk of developing breast cancer.



Eyes

Drinking alcohol can distort one's vision and ability to adjust to lights. It can also result in pinpoint-sized pupils and red eyes.



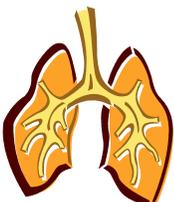
Ears

Consuming alcohol diminishes a person's ability to distinguish between sounds and perceive their direction.



Mouth/Throat

Alcohol consumption may cause slurred speech, dulled taste and smell, and can reduce one's desire to eat. Excessive drinking can cause irritation and damage to the lining of the esophagus, induces severe vomiting, hemorrhaging, pain and difficulty swallowing; excessive consumption can also cause cancer.



Lungs

High amounts of alcohol may cause breathing to stop, then death. It can create a lowered resistance to infection as well.

Muscles

Muscles become weaker and atrophy with excessive alcohol consumption. Pain, spasms and tenderness can also occur.



Bones

Alcohol interferes with the body's ability to absorb calcium resulting in bones being weak, soft, brittle and thinner (Osteoporosis).

Pregnancy and Unborn Babies

Drinking alcohol during pregnancy significantly increases the chance of delivering a baby with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome having problems such as: small head, possible brain damage, abnormal facial features, poor muscle tone, speech and sleep disorders and delayed growth and development. In women, heavy drinking during pregnancy can harm the fetus. The baby, when it is born, may be very small and could have reduced intelligence and facial deformities.

