

# What are the positive and negative effects of alcohol? essay sample

[Food & Diet](#), [Alcohol](#)



There are several positive and negative effects of alcohol. Most of the negative effects come from over consumption of alcohol. How much effect alcohol has on someone depends on a lot of factors. Different people react differently to alcoholic beverages. Some people have higher tolerances for different types of alcohol than others. For example, one person might be able to drink a lot of hard liquor but might feel the same effect of being drunk from only a few beers, while others may have the opposite effect. In any case over consumption of alcohol has many negative effects, both long term and short term.

Negative effects generally only occur when over consumption has taken place. Negative effects tend to take place after the consumption of more than 2-3 drink over a short period of time. After having 3-4 drinks, depending on your blood-alcohol level, you are legally considered drunk and are forbidden from operating a motor vehicle. Also, judgment and reaction time will start to be affected, along with exaggerated behaviors. After having 5-7 drinks one becomes more verbally aggressive, their perception and vision are affected, they are emotionally irrational, and judgment and reaction time are becoming still worse as more alcohol enters the body. After 8-10 drinks, one will start slurring speech, stagger, have blurred vision, motor skills are significantly affected, and some vomiting may take place.

After having more than 10 drinks respiration may be affected, and the intoxicated may be unconscious (if conscious may be unaware of surroundings). If blood-alcohol level reaches more than 0.40, then the person intoxicated will most likely die. The effect that a certain amount of

drinks will have on a person depends on a lot of variables, (food, weight, tolerance, etc) and there are many things that someone can do before drinking to reduce the effect of alcohol and to reduce the effect of a hangover. Hangovers occur because your body still has alcohol in it and has not had enough to metabolize the alcohol. If someone has a hangover, it means that they are essentially still feeling the effects of alcohol because their body could not get rid of all of it the night before, but there are things someone can do to help minimize the effects of a hangover.

When the body metabolizes alcohol it takes about one hour to digest one drink. If more than that is consumed than the body stores the alcohol in the blood stream until the liver is able to handle more alcohol. Other means of extracting alcohol from the body are: through breathing, sweating, urine excretion, and saliva. The rate at which your body metabolizes in general (with food) affects how fast and how much alcohol your body can handle. There are two main ways that the body gets rid of alcohol. The first way is through elimination. Elimination includes getting rid of alcohol through urination, through exhalation and the lungs, and sweating. The second main way that alcohol leaves the body is through oxidation. Oxidation is when the body joins the unwanted substances (alcohol) with oxygen molecules and essentially burns of the alcohol. Oxidation also occurs in the liver whereas elimination does not. Oxidation is how most of the alcohol leaves the body. These two mechanisms are the only way that alcohol is pumped out of the body and both of them take a significant amount of time (1-2 hours per drink).

Some people, many of Asian decent experience something called flushing. This is a reaction to alcohol and can cause people to become dizzy, nauseous, and start to vomit in many cases. Also flushing is know to make people very red and irritated around the neck and face. Flushing is caused because the body is unable to produce enough acetaldehyde enzymes which help the breakdown of alcohol in the body. This is a negative effect of alcohol.

The rate at which people absorb and metabolize alcohol varies for certain reasons. Men are able to tolerate, or absorb more alcohol, than women because men, on average, have more muscle than women. Muscle and fat both absorb alcohol when it gets into the blood stream, but muscle tends to absorb the alcohol faster and in larger quantities. Another factor that tends to affect the effects of alcohol on a person is body size. A smaller person is able to handle a lot less than a heavier person. This is because the larger person has more muscle or fat to absorb the alcohol, and they also have more blood in their body which means that the alcohol is distributed to a larger quantity of blood which in turn means that their blood alcohol level would be lower. Along with size, the specific rate at which each person metabolizes can affect alcohol absorption. The faster the alcohol leaves the body the less the effect it will have on the body.

One major negative effect of drinking alcohol in excess is damage to the liver. People who drink excessive amounts of alcohol over time can do serious damage to their liver and other parts of the body. If alcohol is continuously in the blood stream in large doses and being metabolized by

the liver, then over time, it will cause many liver cells to die and prevent the liver from being able to work properly. Because the liver is constantly being forced to metabolize alcohol then the liver cells do not get a chance to fully repair themselves each time alcohol is put into the system, and this can cause many problems, especially long term ones. This problem of the liver not functioning properly is called Cirrhosis; and although Cirrhosis is a disease like any other, the majority of cases are caused by alcohol. Another part of the body that alcohol affects is the brain. Alcohol kills brain tissue and cells.

Also when people drink alcohol in excess they often ignore the fact that they need a healthy diet and the proper nutrients for their body, and this leads to lack of vitamins for the brain which can be very harmful. This effect is very limited to those who drink alcohol on a casual basis. Alcohol can also cause irritation to the stomach on a short term basis and a long term one. This is because so much alcohol is being put into one place at a time. This depends on whether the alcohol was taken in large doses over time or just irritation from one night of overdose. Alcohol also has very little nutrients and vitamins and nutritional value; but has a large amount of calories. This encourages weight gain which can lead to much more serious problems, such as blood clots, heart attack, and in extreme cases death.

Another part of your body that alcohol affects is your skin. Many studies show that if you drink a significant amount of alcohol each week, or more than two to three drinks, overtime, you will begin to see signs of aging. These signs include glassy looking eyes, cracked lips and wrinkled skin.

Alcohol also does damage to the immune system over time, and increases the risk of getting sick. A big potential problem for anyone who drinks alcohol is that their judgment is impaired, which can cause someone to do sometime illegal or seriously injure themselves. Alcohol affects almost every part of the body whether it is indirect or direct. It also has both short and long term effects that can cause serious problems for many people.

From all the negative effects that alcohol has, one would think that there are no positive effects. This is not the case. The majority of the negative effects are most significant for those who engage in binge drinking and continuously have a large quantity of alcohol in their system. For people who drink alcohol on a casual basis there are several positive effects and it can be very beneficial for many reasons. First, alcohol makes people more relaxed and easy going. It allows people to speak more freely and to express their feelings to other people in healthy doses. It also allows people to be more socially acceptable. From a health perspective, alcohol reduces the risk of heart disease, especially if red wine is drunk on a regular basis with healthy doses. Another health benefit is that alcohol reduces the risk of dieing from a heart attack. This would especially benefit those who are of older age but do not drink excessive amounts of alcohol. There is also a chance that alcohol can reduce the risk of getting diabetes. All of these health and social benefits are most effective, if not always, when alcohol is drunk casually and in healthy doses.

Alcohol has a big effect on the brain; in fact if alcohol didn't have an effect on the brain then we probably wouldn't drink it. People drink alcohol to

relieve stress and to forget about their lives and the bad things happening in it, in some cases; therefore the brain is being altered to think in different ways and to judge and see things from a different perspective. This different perspective is more relaxing and stress free; and almost forces the person drinking to forget about the things that are troubling them in life. It also allows people to speak more freely and almost “let loose” in a way. These feelings of joy only work to a certain point though. In many cases if people who are depressed drink alcohol to try and forget what they are depressed about they often end up making things worse. This is because they become irrational about their feelings and start to jump to conclusions and exaggerate feelings, good or bad. People who are depressed are strongly encouraged not to drink alcohol because it will most likely just make things worse and they will not feel the same effect that normal people would feel from alcohol. Alcohol has a major effect on the brain and can seriously change people's mind set on things around them and in their lives, but these changes are not always good, especially if you are depressed.

Another part of the body that alcohol has a major effect on is the heart. When alcohol is put into your body, your body recognizes it as a poison and immediately starts to try and get rid of that poison. In order to get rid of alcohol, your heart starts to beat faster in order to try and speed the whole process up, which increases your blood pressure. Your heart is constantly increasing and decreasing the rate at which it beats but if more than a healthy dose of alcohol is put in the body over a long period of time than this

will seriously increase the chances of having a heart attack, a stroke and high blood pressure. People who continuously have a large amount of alcohol in their systems can potentially develop serious heart problems.

The potential result of alcohol over dose is alcohol poisoning. Alcohol poisoning is when someone has taken in too much alcohol, and has surpassed their tolerance. Some people may experience it before others depending on tolerance, but symptoms include vomiting, unconsciousness, and slow deep breathing. If someone who is very intoxicated falls asleep or passes out, they should try to be woken immediately and if there is no response then medical attention is most likely needed. Alcohol poisoning is a serious threat to those who drink alcohol, especially those who engage in binge drinking.

Alcohol can be a very dangerous drink to those who do not drink it responsibly. It has both positive and negative effects, but if one exceeds their tolerance either once or many times over a long period of time, then the results could be fatal. Alcohol has many benefits to those who drink it casually, but if more than 2-3 drinks are consumed over a short period of time then the negative effects start to occur. There are many factors that will effect how each person reacts to a certain amount of alcohol. Some factors include: weight, tolerance, food in stomach, and amount of time between each drink. It has been proven that alcohol can affect almost all parts of the body, whether it is over an extended period of time or over a short period of time; especially to the heart, brain and liver. Although the negative effects do out number the positive effects, if one generally drinks responsibly and



does not over consume, then one will normally see only positive effects of alcohol.

#### Bibliography:

Luks, Allan and Joseph Barbato. You Are What You Drink Villard Books, New York, 1989.

Hyde, Margaret O. and John F. Setard, M. D. Alcohol 101, An Overview For Teens. Twenty First Century Books, Brookfield, Connecticut, 1999.

Stepney, Rob. Alcohol. Aladdin Books Ltd, New York, 1987.

Peacock, Nancy B. Alcohol. Chelsea House Publishers, Philadelphia, 2000.

O'Neill, Catherine. Focus on Alcohol. Twenty First Century Books, Frederick, Maryland, 1990.

Hyde, Margaret O. and John F. Setard, M. D. Drugs 101, An Overview for Teens. Twenty First Century Books, Brookfield, Connecticut, 2003.

Taylor, Barbara. Everything You Need to Know About Alcohol. The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc, New York, 1988.

Zeller, Paula Klevan. Focus On Marajuana. Twenty First Century Books, Frederick, Maryland, 1990.

Ward, Brian R. Alcohol Abuse. Franklin Watts. London, 1987.

Fradin, Dennis. Drug Abuse. Childrens Press, Chicago, 1988.

Pringle, Laurence. *Drinking: A Risky Business*. Morrow Junior Books, New York, 1997.

<http://www.tcada.state.tx.us/issues/danger.html>

<http://www.oregoncounseling.org/ArticlesPapers/Documents/ETOHBIOfx.htm>

[http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/alc\\_aayb.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/alc_aayb.htm)

[http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/alc\\_aayb.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/alc_aayb.htm)

<http://web4health.info/en/answers/add-alcohol-goodbad.htm>

<http://www.radford.edu/~kcastleb/affect.html>

<http://www.gurney.co.uk/drinksense/factsheets/effects.htm>

[http://www.intox.com/about\\_alcohol.asp](http://www.intox.com/about_alcohol.asp)

[http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/alc\\_aayb.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/alc_aayb.htm)

[http://www.brown.edu/Student\\_Services/Health\\_Services/Health\\_Education/atod/alc\\_aayb.htm](http://www.brown.edu/Student_Services/Health_Services/Health_Education/atod/alc_aayb.htm)

[http://members.aol.com/intoxikon/alcohol\\_poisoning.html](http://members.aol.com/intoxikon/alcohol_poisoning.html)

<http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/som/cmed/alcohol/metabolism.htm>

<http://www.hsc.wvu.edu/som/cmed/alcohol/short-term.htm>

<https://assignbuster.com/what-are-the-positive-and-negative-effects-of-alcohol-essay-sample/>