

# Addiction and genetics

[Health & Medicine](#), [Addiction](#)



Alcohol abuse is one of the most researched subjects. Many people, young and old, are addicted to it though they already know the negative effects of it. Some researchers try to prove that alcohol abuse is inherited. To some degree, alcohol abuse or alcoholism is adapted by an individual from his environment. What an individual observes daily may be inherited. It has great effects on our health and in our society.

Many crimes and accidents happen because of drinking excessive alcohol. However, not all crimes are the result of alcohol intake but most likely, crimes happened because of excessive drinking of alcohol. True or false? In large amounts, alcohol is a depressant; in small amounts, it is a stimulant.

False. Small doses of “spirits” may indeed, enliven a drinker, but they do so by slowing activity in brain centers that control judgment and inhibitions. Alcohol facilitates urges that the individual might otherwise resist by focusing attention on the immediate situation and away from future consequences (Steele & Josephs, 2000). If provoked, people under alcohol’s influence respond more aggressively than usual.

If asked to help, people under alcohol’s influence respond more helpfully than usual. In everyday life, alcohol disinhibits both harmful tendencies, as when sexually coercive college men try to disinhibit their dates by getting them to drink (Mosher & Anderson, 1999), and helpful tendencies, as when restaurant patrons tip more when tipsy (M. Lynn, 1999).

Thus, alcohol makes us more aggressive or helpful—or self-disclosing or sexually daring—when such tendencies are present. Whatever urges you feel when sober, you are more likely to act upon if intoxicated.

Low doses of alcohol relax the drinker by slowing sympathetic nervous system activity. With larger doses, alcohol can become a staggering problem: Reactions slow, speech slurs, and skilled performance deteriorates. These physical effects, combined with the lowering of inhibitions, contribute to alcohol's worst consequences—in America, the more than 100, 000 lives claimed annually in alcohol-related car accidents and violent crime (Lord, 2001).

This paper scrutinizes the relation of alcohol abuse of an individual to genetic factor.

## II. Background

### A. Negative effects of Alcohol abuse

Alcohol has an intriguing effect on memory. It impairs neither short-term recall for what just happened nor existing long-term memories. Rather, it disrupts the processing of recent experiences into long-term memories.

Thus, the day after being intoxicated, heavy drinkers may not recall whom they met or what they said or did the night before. This memory blackout stems partly from an inability to transfer memories from the intoxicated to the sober state (Eich, 2000). Blackouts after drinking may also result from alcohol's suppression of REM sleep.

Alcohol has another intriguing effect on consciousness: It reduces self-awareness. Compared with people who feel good about themselves, those who want to suppress their awareness of failures or shortcomings are more likely to drink. The Nazi doctors who selected “ unfit” inmates for the gas chambers often did so while drunk, or got drunk afterwards (Lifton, 1999).

As with other psychoactive drugs, alcohol's behavioral effects stem not only from its alteration of brain chemistry but also from the user's expectations. Many studies have found that when people believe that alcohol affects social behavior in certain ways, and believe, rightly or wrongly, that they have been drinking alcohol; they will behave accordingly (Leigh, 2002).

For example, alcohol per se has some effect on sexual arousal, by decreasing cognitive inhibitions (Crow & George, 1999). But people become even more responsive to sexual stimuli if they believe alcohol promotes arousal and believe they have been drinking. From their view of research, Jay Hull and Charles Bond concluded (2001) that for some people alcohol serves "as an excuse to become sexually aroused."

Consider one such experiment by David Abrams and Terence Wilson. They gave Rutgers University men who volunteered for a study on "alcohol and sexual stimuli" either an alcoholic or a nonalcoholic drink. (Both drinks had a strong taste that masked any alcohol.) In each group, half the subjects thought they were drinking alcohol and half thought they were not.

Regardless of what they drank, after being shown an erotic movie clip, the men who thought they had consumed alcohol were more likely to report having strong sexual fantasies and feeling guilt-free.

Thus, being able to attribute their sexual responses to alcohol released their inhibitions—whether they actually had drunk alcohol or not. This illustrates an important principle: A drug's psychological effects are powerfully influenced by the user's psychological state.