

Women and Alcohol

How we are Different than Men

- We have less of the protective metabolizing enzyme ADH (alcohol dehydrogenase) in our stomachs than men do, so alcohol is metabolized slower and more alcohol gets into our bloodstream (about 30% more). In other words, one drink for a woman can have approximately the same effect as two drinks for a man.
- Our bodies are composed of 45-55% water (compared to men's 55-65% water), which means that alcohol is more diluted in a man's body than a woman's. Women also have more body fat than men do; since alcohol is not fat soluble, the concentration of alcohol in a woman's blood will be higher than that of a man.
- We also tend to be smaller than men are, and since body weight is one of the determinants of intoxication, we are automatically at a disadvantage. The smaller the person, the room for alcohol to distribute itself, hence, the alcohol is less diluted upon reaching the brain.
- Where we are in our menstrual cycle will affect our ability to oxidize alcohol. Elevated estrogen levels have been found to lead to slower alcohol metabolism rates, which in turn elevates a woman's Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC). These affects also result from elevated levels of estrogen produced by oral contraceptives.
- Health risks are greater for women in terms of long-term alcohol use: anemia, malnutrition, stomach irritation and lower resistance to disease. Alcoholism appears to progress much more rapidly in women than in men, and there is a strong tie between alcohol abuse and breast and neck cancer in women. Alcohol abuse also can result in the body's inability to use vitamins and calcium, leading to aggravated acne, dandruff, and dull skin and hair.
- Because women use prescription drugs 50% more often than men, women who combine alcohol with other drugs are at a much higher risk for drug interaction effects (e.g., impaired mental and motor abilities).
- The suicide rate among women and alcohol problems is higher than that of the general population.
- Alcohol use can impair your judgment and reduce your ability to make healthy decisions and choices. Unwanted or unprotected sex and date rape

are more likely to occur when one or both people have been drinking. This affects both women and men.

- 60% of college women who acquire an STI, including HIV/AIDS, had been drinking at the time of infection.

Adapted from materials provided by the BACCUS and GAAMA Peer Education Network and Mt Holyoke College.

Effects and Potential Consequences of Alcohol Abuse for Women and Men

Alcohol is a depressant drug that slows down the nervous system. Some of alcohol's physical effects include:

- Loss of muscle control, leading to slurred speech and poor coordination
- Staggering, dizziness
- Hangover, fatigues, nausea, headache
- Blackouts (memory loss)
- Unconsciousness
- Impaired thinking and reasoning processes
- Loss of inhibitions, exaggerated anxiety, or sadness
- Damage to liver, heart and central nervous system
- Altered perceptions and emotions
- Alcoholism
- Impaired judgment
- Death (as a result of alcohol poisoning)

Drug/Alcohol Programs and Services CSB/SJU Counseling and Health Promotion

For more information or to schedule an appointment, call either campus:

CSB: 320-363-5605

SJU: 320-363-3236

- Walk-in Wednesdays: Screening for alcohol and drugs, anxiety, depression, and eating disorders every Wednesday from 1-3 p.m. at either the CSB or SJU Counseling and Health Promotion office (CSB: Mary Commons, 2nd floor; SJU: Mary 8)
- Referral to other agencies for chemical use/abuse (e.g. Recovery Plus)
- Counseling services

- **Substance abuse assessment**
- **Outreach/workshops on a variety of health and mental health topics**
- **Consultation (if you have questions about your substance use or another persons use)**
- **Passive programming/flyers of information posted throughout campus**
- **Substance Abuse Education Workshops are offered to CSB/SJU students through the Counseling and Health Promotion office at SJU. Please call 363-3236 for more information.**