

Substance Misuse

The Truth About Alcohol

Are the following true or false?

1. Alcohol is digested in the same way that food is digested.

False: Alcohol is metabolized extremely quickly by the body. Unlike food, it requires no digestion. About 80% of the alcohol is absorbed in the small intestine. The rest is absorbed directly from the stomach.

2. Moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages is generally not harmful to the body.

True: According to the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse (CCSA), we should follow Canada's Low-Risk Alcohol Drinking Guidelines in order to reduce our chances of developing health risks associated with alcohol. Women should have no more than 2 drinks a day and 10 drinks in the course of a week and men should have no more than 3 drinks a day and 15 drinks in the course of a week. However, it is not recommended to start drinking if you haven't yet. These guidelines do not apply to you if you are pregnant, are trying to get pregnant or before breastfeeding. You should not consume alcohol if you are taking medication such as sedatives, pain killers and sleeping pills. People with any medical problem should discuss with their physician about consuming alcohol. For more information visit [Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse](#).

3. Alcohol is not a drug.

False: Alcohol is a drug. It is the number one drug of choice amongst Canadians.

4. Eating while drinking slows the absorption of alcohol in the body.

True: Having food in the stomach that absorbs some of the alcohol will help slow absorption of alcohol into the bloodstream. Therefore, it is a good idea to eat before and while you are drinking.

5. It takes about as many hours as the number of beers consumed for the liver to completely burn up the alcohol ingested.

True: Alcohol is metabolized by the liver at about one drink an hour. A standard drink is defined as 12 oz of beer, 4 oz of wine or 1.5 oz of hard liquor.

6. A person cannot become an alcoholic just by drinking beer.

False: People can abuse any type of alcoholic beverage, including beer. Remember, beer has the same type of alcohol as wine and distilled spirits.

7. Drinking coffee or taking a cold shower can be an effective way of decreasing blood alcohol levels.

False: Only time can sober you up.

8. Alcohol is considered a stimulant.

False: In fact, alcohol is a depressant drug. It slows down the central nervous system.

9. A blood alcohol concentration (BAC) above 0.08% is illegal.

True: It's a criminal offence! In fact, if you are caught driving with a BAC over 0.08% you will face serious consequences: a one year license suspension, a minimum \$600 fine, you will need to purchase and install an interlock system and also take part of the "Back on Track Program". Don't drink and drive!

10. Approximately 10% of fatal highway injuries are alcohol-related.

False: Research shows that alcohol accounts for more than half of fatal highway injuries in Canada.

Adapted from the Bowles Centre for Alcohol Studies