



December 2017 Newsletter

Safe socializing for the holidays

The holidays can be a time for tinsel and lights and merriment—but celebrating doesn't have to be an occasion to overdo it. As mindful drinking catches on and low- and non-alcohol drinks are more widely available, there are more choices for people who want to embrace moderation this holiday season.

And there are organizations that help support a more mindful approach to drinking. Better Drinking Culture helps promote healthier attitudes about alcohol. They tout the benefits of moderate drinking, the idea of quality over quantity and the joys of being hangover-free. Hello Sunday Morning is an organization with an online community of over 100,000 people world-wide who are trying to have a healthier relationship with alcohol, and Sunday mornings without hangovers. Club Soda, based in the UK, has great strategies for refusal skills when you don't want to drink the grog.

Safety around alcohol is everyone's responsibility. Off-license establishments, as well as bars and restaurants, need to be consistent about checking ID, and not selling alcohol to intoxicated customers. Promotions that encourage overconsumption should not be used as a way to boost sales. Because of alcohol's effect on judgment, these kinds of safeguards are needed.

If you do decide to drink when you go out, here are some steps to help you stay safe.

Educate yourself: What's in your drink?

A standard drink pour is 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. wine and 1.5 oz. of liquor. Beer is usually sold in measured amounts such as a standard size bottle or a poured pint. But wine and spirits are "free poured" so the precise amount varies from drink to drink, and some bartenders like to give "generous pours".

The alcohol content of these products varies widely

from 4.2% alcohol in a light beer to 10% in a double IPA. Wine can be 10-17% and spirits 40-95%. This is even more complicated when a mixed drink contains several shots. Certain mixers speed up the body's absorption of alcohol—sugar slows down absorption, so mixed drinks made with diet soda could affect a person differently. And it pays to do your research-- some "heavier" dark beers actually have less alcohol and calories than light colored-beers. The way that alcohol affects an individual can be different if they haven't eaten, are dehydrated, or are stressed— and it's easy to be stressed during the holidays.



Plan your ride

Every day 29 people in the US die in alcohol-related vehicle crashes--that's one person every 50 minutes. We need to take steps to cut fatalities on our roads due to alcohol misuse, as we continue to see over 10,000 deaths every year. That is way too many.

In most states the blood alcohol content over which driving is illegal is .08%. In 2013, the National Highway Safety Board announced its support for lowering the BAC level to .05, since some impairment can happen at lower levels. But so far, only Utah lowered the legal BAC for driving, although it's not effective until December 30, 2018. Critics

worry about the lack of resources for implementing a lower standard, since they feel that there is not enough enforcement the .08 level that already exists.

The bottom line is you don't want to be driving over the BAC limit in your state particularly since it's so hard to measure your own BAC. The safest approach is: if you will be drinking, plan on not driving. Make plans for how you'll get home before you head out. Make arrangements with a designated driver (and maybe buy them a few delicious non-alcoholic drinks), and make sure you have info on hand for local cabs or ride services.

Hydrate!

Drinking water between alcoholic drinks is a good way to keep from drinking too quickly and avoiding dehydration. (In New Zealand, having water available to patrons has been written into law: bars are required to make available free water as part of the 2012 The Sale and Supply of Alcohol Act. Not a bad idea.)

Consider the "mindful drinking" campaign

Organizations such as Better Drinking Culture, ClubSoda, and Hello Sunday Morning have some good tips for enjoying yourself without drinking too much. They have great ideas for improving refusal skills and tips for changing your behavior around drinking without having to give up the social interactions we all need to stay sane.

Consider drinking low alcohol or no alcohol products

There are a lot more of them now and they are of better quality. Brewers, vintners and distillers have gotten hip to the idea that not everyone wants to drink alcohol, and have started focusing on the market for low and non-alcoholic drinks. Beer, wines, even spirits, are now available.

Licenseses that understand new patterns of behavior will stock no and low alcohol products and brush up on their mock-tail repertoire. Nondrinking patrons will likely spend money on drinks that make them feel special, too.

Links:

<https://fortune.com/2016/07/13/non-alcoholic-beer/>
<https://joinclubsoda.co.uk/>
<https://betterdrinkingculture.org/>
<https://www.hellosundaymorning.org/>
<https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/drunk-driving>

For more information, see www.healthyalcoholmarket.com

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