

4 Things You May Be Surprised to Learn About Women and Drinking

The number of college women abusing alcohol is on the rise and this trend is having dangerous effects. About one in three female students engage in binge drinking (consuming four or more drinks in a row, often in quick succession) and women make up more than half of alcohol abusers among college students. Here are some reasons why women should rethink how much they drink:

1.) ONE DRINK HAS TWICE THE EFFECT ON WOMEN: One drink for a woman has about twice the effect of one for a man. This means a woman will become drunker faster and with less alcohol. Biological differences make women more vulnerable to alcohol's effects. Here's why:

- A woman's body contains less water and more fatty tissue than a man's—even if they are the same weight. Because fat retains alcohol while water dilutes it, alcohol remains at higher concentrations for longer periods of time in a woman's body.
- Women have lower levels of two enzymes that break down alcohol in the stomach and liver. As a result, women absorb more alcohol into their bloodstreams than men.

2.) ALCOHOL IS A MAJOR FACTOR IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

Alcohol plays a role in as many as three of every four rapes and nearly the same percentage of domestic violence incidents.

- According to a 2009 study in the Journal of American College Health, by the time they are seniors, almost 20% of college women will become victims of a sexual assault. Very few will ever report it to authorities. More than 80% of campus sexual assaults involve alcohol. Frequently, both the man and the woman have been drinking.

3.) THE RISK OF DEPENDENCE ON ALCOHOL FOR WOMEN IS ABOUT DOUBLE THAT FOR MEN:

Researchers say the reasons could be hormonal or psychological. For example, college women are more likely than men to abuse alcohol in order to relieve stress, improve their mood, reduce sexual inhibitions, and increase confidence. Why do you drink?

Because women become dependent on alcohol more easily than men, drinking even moderately can be a slippery slope. Some experts believe that women who drink even one alcoholic drink per day may be putting themselves at increased risk for health problems.

4.) MODERATE DRINKING LEVELS VARY FOR EACH WOMAN: While moderate drinking for women is defined as no more than seven drinks a week and no more than three on any given day, those definitions can change based on the woman. The amount a woman can safely drink depends on:

- Weight and health
- Genetic makeup and family history
- Time since eating
- Age

