

# COLLEGE, ALCOHOL, AND YOU

You finished moving into your room, met your roommate, and your family has gone home. You are finally on your own and ready to meet new friends at one of the parties you have heard about.

If you decide to attend a party, and choose to drink alcoholic beverages, then you should be aware of the possible consequences if you are under the age of 21.

The University Police does not normally issue "warnings" for underage drinking violations. If you are under the age of 21 and do anything to attract the attention of a police officer, after drinking alcohol, you will most likely be arrested, and issued a citation. There are situations where an alcohol violation may be a factor in an investigation, but the crime committed is more important than pursuing an alcohol violation. (i.e. sexual assault, domestic abuse, etc.) However the majority of contacts by the University Police with underage drinkers have to do with loud music, disorderly conduct, suspicious behavior, damaging property, personal injury, accidents and driving violations.

Unfortunately police are seeing an increase in the number of young drivers, under the age

of 21, being arrested for underage drinking. Wisconsin has an **Absolute Sobriety** statute which states that anyone under the age of 21 can

not have any alcohol in his/her blood when driving or operating a motor vehicle. If the driver's alcohol concentration is .08 or higher, the driver/operator will probably be arrested for operating a motor vehicle while under the influence. In either situation, the underage person who makes the decision to drive or operate a motor vehicle after consuming alcoholic beverages risks the possibility of having his/her driver's license suspended, and motor vehicle insurance rates increased considerably. Needless to say, the consequences are greater if the decision to drive involves a vehicle accident, and escalates if there are injuries or death.

## CONSEQUENCES OF DRINKING

Information provided by the Core Institute, an organization that surveys college drinking practices "indicates that 300,000 of today's college students will eventually die of alcohol related causes." (Drunk driving accidents, cirrhosis of the liver, cancer and heart disease.)

Core Institute statistics also indicate that 159,000 first year college students will drop out of school for alcohol or drug related reasons. The Core Institute estimates that the average college student will spend \$900 on alcohol each year!

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism provides these statistics from 2002:

- 1,400 students die from alcohol related causes (1,100 of these are related to driving)
- 500,000 students suffer non-fatal injuries
- 400,000 have unprotected sex
- More than 100,000 students are too intoxicated to know whether they consented to sexual intercourse
- 1.2 percent of students attempted suicide related to alcohol or drug use
- More than 150,000 students developed health problems related to alcohol use.
- 11 percent of students damaged property
  
- 2.1 million students drove while under the influence of alcohol

Research indicates that the number of students who are binge drinking frequently is increasing, but statistics also indicate the number of students abstaining or only drinking infrequently without getting intoxicated is also increasing! It is unfortunate that those who choose not to drink must suffer the **secondary effects of alcohol use**. The secondary effects of alcohol use include:

- study or sleep interrupted
- having to take care of an intoxicated friend or roommate
- being insulted or humiliated
- experiencing unwanted sexual advances
- serious argument or quarrel
- being pushed, hit or assaulted
- being the victim of a sexual assault or acquaintance rape

There are also **community consequences** for neighborhoods surrounding campuses and areas that are known for parties. These include:

- alcohol related noise and disturbances
- vandalism and theft of property
- public drunkenness
- vomit and public urination on private property

## SEXUAL ASSAULT AND ALCOHOL

The concern over Date Rape Drugs has increased during the last several years; however, we forget that alcohol is the most common date-rape drug used in the U.S. The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism estimates that alcohol is involved in 600,000 assaults and 70,000 cases of sexual assault among college students each year.

WI ss 940.225(2)(cm) specifically states that it is a crime to have sexual contact or intercourse with a person who is under the influence of an intoxicant to the degree which renders that person incapable of appraising the person's conduct. WI ss 940.225(2)(d) further states that it is a crime to have sexual contact or intercourse with a person who the defendant knows is unconscious.

It is a victim's choice whether or not to report a sexual assault to the police or school officials. In a number of cases involving alcohol, victims do not report because of the inability to remember what exactly happened, a feeling of guilt, and trying to protect others involved. The victim may also experience some concern for the person responsible for the sexual assault.

The victim should have a medical exam even if not reporting the assault. The medical exam can provide a written record of the incident in the event that the victim decides to report at a later time. Medical records are confidential, and in most cases require the patient's consent before being released.

### **RAPID BINGE DRINKING**

This type of drinking normally occurs on a bet or dare. It is commonly associated with the "21<sup>st</sup>" birthday celebration. The Remove Intoxicated Drivers Organization estimates that 4,000 deaths occur each year from alcohol overdose primarily caused by drinking too much alcohol too fast. In other words, the 21 shots on your 21<sup>st</sup> birthday can be deadly.

This type of drinking can be deadly because the individual consumes a fatal dose of alcohol before passing out. Even after the person stops drinking, alcohol is still entering the bloodstream from the stomach and intestine. Do not make the assumption that the person will be okay by "sleeping it off."

### **ALCOHOL POISONING**

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence discovered that students are surprised to learn that they can die from an alcohol overdose. At the most, they expect a bad hangover and maybe a "blackout."

Some of the signs indicating that someone is drunk include:

- feeling of well-being and relaxation
- lower inhibitions
- sensation of warmth
- lowering of caution – increased risk taking
- loss of fine motor coordination

- inability to do complex tasks
- slurred speech; too loud or too fast
- lowered reasoning ability
- difficulty balancing
- loose muscle tone
- inability to walk or staggering
- slower reaction times
- glassy eyes
- blurry or double vision
- hearing problems
- loss of short and/or long term memory
- heavy sweating
- skin cool to touch
- anxiety, restlessness
- mental confusion
- slower pupil response

**Anyone who is showing any of the signs above should be encouraged to stop drinking, and be watched.**

### **DEATH BY ALCOHOL**

Alcohol depresses the nerves that control involuntary functions such as breathing and the gag reflex. An overdose of alcohol can cause death or irreversible brain damage by:

- choking on vomit
- breathing slows, becomes irregular or stops
- heart beats irregularly or stops
- hypothermia
- hypoglycemia leading to seizures
- severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage, or death

### **WHEN TO CALL FOR HELP**

#### **CRITICAL SIGNS OF ALCOHOL POISONING**

**If a person displays any of the symptoms listed below after drinking alcoholic beverages, you should seek help immediately:**

- mental confusion, stupor, coma, or person can not be roused.
- vomiting
- seizures
- slow breathing – fewer than 8 breaths per minute
- irregular breathing – 10 seconds or more between breaths

- hypothermia – low body temperature, bluish skin color, paleness

No one wants to see a friend in trouble, but when you ignore the signs of alcohol poisoning, you may be placing your friend's life in jeopardy. Even if the person lives, an alcohol overdose may lead to irreversible brain damage.

### **RESOURCES**

There are a number of community resources that may be contacted to assist you if you have concerns or need immediate help with an alcohol problem. There are additional resources within your home community as well. Please do not hesitate to contact any of those resources if you need help for yourself, friend or family member.

### **UNIVERSITY**

Student Health Services	342-1891
Counseling Services	342-1865
Student Affairs	342-1854
University Police	342-1584

### **COMMUNITY**

Southwest Health Center	348-2313
Unified Counseling -	
24 Hour Emergency	1-800-362-5717
Family Advocates Abuse Services	348-5995
24 Hour Help Line	1-800-924-2624
Alcohol – Drug Treatment Referral	1-800-454-8966
Boscobel Counseling Services	608-375-6341

**Information provided by the  
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608-342-1584  
[www.uwplatt.edu/police](http://www.uwplatt.edu/police)**