



News you can use...from your EAP

Co-use of Alcohol and Caffeine Can Raise Risks from Intoxication

If you drink, you should know that coffee won't sober you up if you've had too much to drink. Instead, a cup of coffee may make it harder for you to realize that you're drunk. This, according to a study reported in the December 2009 journal *Behavioral Neuroscience*.

The myth about coffee's sobering powers is particularly important to debunk, said the researchers, because the co-use of caffeine and alcohol can actually lead to poor decisions with disastrous outcomes. People who have consumed only alcohol, who feel tired and intoxicated, may be more likely to acknowledge that they are drunk. Conversely, people who have consumed both alcohol and caffeine may feel awake and competent enough to handle potentially harmful situations, such as driving while intoxicated or placing themselves in dangerous social situations.

In recent years, alcohol-energy drink combinations have skyrocketed in popularity. The study authors noted evidence that these drinks produce deficits in general cognitive ability and raise the odds of alcohol-related problems such as drunken-driving citations, sexual misconduct, and needing medical assistance.

Tips for drinking wisely (or not at all)

- **Develop a responsible attitude toward drinking.** This basically means not becoming drunk. Consider the rights of those who choose to abstain. You don't need to drink in order to have a good time, even though it has become an accepted part of socializing in this country.
- **Measure your drinks.** Five ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1-1/2 ounces of spirits is the maximum that a 160-pound man should consume in an hour. A lighter person should drink less.
- **Know your limit when you drink.** If you drink slowly (instead of gulping), you won't get drunk as quickly. If your drink somehow vanishes before an hour is up, switch to juice or a soft drink. Don't accept unfamiliar drinks. They may contain more alcohol than you are used to drinking.
- **Never take drugs (even non-prescription ones) in combination with drinking.** Alcohol can negate the action of some drugs, can make you sick when combined with others, and can be fatal (for example when you combine alcohol with too many sleeping pills).
- **Never drive after you've been drinking.** If you must drive, wait at least an hour before driving for each drink you've had (equivalent to one beer or one ounce of whiskey).

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