

Holiday Gift Guide

Mix holiday drinking with common sense

According to the National Safety Council, 40,000 deaths occur each year on U.S. highways and alcohol is a factor in over one-half of those deaths. Drivers who drink cause 40,000 accidents a year, and cause one needless, senseless, avoidable death every 20 minutes. Each year, drinking and driving results in costs of several billion dollars in property damage, insurance costs and medical services, serious injuries to approximately three quarters of a million people, and arrests for over one million people.

Few people would argue that alcohol-related traffic accidents are not a serious problem. Tougher laws are being enacted on a statewide and national level, and citizens all over the country are forming groups to combat drinking and driving.

But it's not enough. There are factors that only you can control: by not drinking if you've had an alcoholic drinks, by not letting friends drive if they've been drinking and by being a good friend and a good host by encouraging friends to stay over, or by calling a taxi or by

driving them home yourself.

To help offset the adverse consequences of drinking, an understanding of how alcohol affects the body is helpful.

Alcohol's effects and after-effects are influenced not only by how much you drink, but also by what and how fast you drink; what you may have eaten recently; how much you weigh; your emotional state and expectations; your general health; and whether you are a man or a woman, a young adult or a senior citizen, athletic or sedentary. Once consumed, only time can mitigate the consequences of alcohol.

The more concentrated the drink and the faster you drink it, the greater its effect on your body and mind. In general, it takes an hour to an hour-and-a half for the body to metabolize the alcohol in one drink, so if you sip your drink slowly and wait at least an hour before you have a refill, you're likely to stay sober. If you dilute your drink with seltzer, club soda, mineral water, juice or a soft drink, and add plenty of ice, you may slow its impact.

Alcohol is absorbed much more rapidly if your stomach is empty (20 percent is absorbed directly from the stomach, the rest through the small intestine). Be sure that you eat something before drinking, preferably bulky, fiber-rich food (like whole wheat bread or raw vegetables) or one high in protein or fat (like cheese).

Drink only in a relaxed comfortable setting. If you are under stress, emotionally upset, or tired, alcohol has a greater impact. And if you expect to get drunk, you're more likely to feel alcohol's impact than if you plan to stay sober.

Know your capacity. Drinking should never be a contest. Decide upon an amount that you know you can handle comfortably and stick with it, no matter how much your companions drink. If your limit is one drink an evening and you plan to have wine with dinner, then sip.

Be especially careful if you are taking any other medications since their combination with alcohol could greatly impair your driving ability. For example, antihistamines, which

are contained in many non-prescription cold remedies, cough medicines, allergy preparations, hay fever medications, and decongestants, may cause drowsiness and greatly affect driving ability. They may also sharply increase the effects of alcohol. If you're taking prescription medication, ask your physician or pharmacist about the dangers of combining your medication with alcohol or other drugs. If you're using a non-prescription drug, read and follow the warnings on the label and consult your pharmacist if you have any questions.

As a host you can do much to assure that your guests enjoy your party and leave sober.

Serve food whenever you serve drinks. Snacks that help to slow the absorption of alcohol include meat or cheese with crackers or bread, as well as creamy dips with vegetables. Avoid salty snacks since these tend to make drinkers thirsty.

Offer nonalcoholic beverages

when you serve drinks and be generous with ice cubes and mixers.

If possible, keep the bar in another room to discourage guests from easy refills. It's best to pour

drinks yourself and to measure; an overly generous host often means drunk guests. Don't race to refill every glass the moment it falls below the halfway mark.

DE LEUR MASONRY

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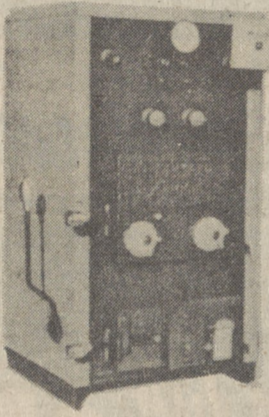
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