

DID YOU KNOW?

There are many common myths about sobering up: drinking black coffee, taking a cold shower, sleeping it off... The only thing, however, that reverses the effects of alcohol is **time**. Many different factors affect an individual's level of intoxication, so it's often difficult to gauge exactly how much is too much for any one person. For more information on your personal Blood Alcohol Content (BAC), check out this online [BAC Calculator](#).

Alcohol depresses nerves that control involuntary actions, such as breathing and the gag reflex (which prevent choking). A fatal dose of alcohol will eventually stop these functions. Additionally, it is common for someone who drank excessively to vomit, since alcohol is an irritant to the stomach. If the person is unconscious, there is then the danger of him/her choking on vomit, which could cause death by asphyxiation.

You should also know that a person's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) can continue to rise even while he or she is passed out. Even after a person stops drinking, alcohol in the stomach and intestine continues to enter the bloodstream and circulate throughout the body. It is dangerous to assume the person will be fine by sleeping it off.

CRITICAL SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF ALCOHOL POISONING

- ▶ Mental confusion, stupor, coma, or person cannot be roused
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Seizures
- ▶ Slow breathing (fewer than eight breaths per minute)
- ▶ Irregular breathing (10 seconds or more between breaths)
- ▶ Hypothermia (low body temperature), bluish skin color, or paleness

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SUSPECT SOMEONE HAS ALCOHOL POISONING?

- ▶ Know the danger signals.
- ▶ Don't wait for all of the symptoms to be present.
- ▶ Be aware that a person who has passed out may die.
- ▶ Call 911 for help if there's any suspicion of an alcohol overdose. Don't try to guess the person's level of drunkenness.

WHAT CAN HAPPEN IF ALCOHOL POISONING GOES UNTREATED?

- ▶ Victim chokes on his or her own vomit
- ▶ Breathing slows, becomes irregular, or stops
- ▶ Heart beats irregularly or stops
- ▶ Hypothermia (low body temperature)
- ▶ Hypoglycemia (too little blood sugar) leads to seizures
- ▶ Untreated severe dehydration from vomiting can cause seizures, permanent brain damage, or death

Even if the victim lives, an alcohol overdose can lead to irreversible brain damage. Rapid binge drinking (which often happens on a bet or a dare) is especially dangerous because the victim can ingest a fatal dose before becoming unconscious.

Don't worry that your friend may become angry or embarrassed. Remember, you cared enough to help. Always be safe, not sorry.

Source: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse & Alcoholism [<http://www.collegedrinkingprevention.org>]

ALCOHOL POISONING