Does Tolerance Make a Difference?

Tolerance is a measure of how much our body has adapted to alcohol. As tolerance goes up, our body adapts to a particular blood level of alcohol as being 'normal' for us. In the case of alcohol, research indicates that tolerance decreases the "euphoric" effects of alcohol, and increases hangover effects. You end up spending more time and money attempting to achieve alcohol's positive effects and it will take more time to recover from over-consumption.

As tolerance makes our system less sensitive to alcohol, it is also making us less aware of how impaired we really are. **People with a high tolerance have even less sensitivity to the effects of alcohol and are even less likely to accurately gauge when they are impaired.**

To reduce your risk of developing tolerance:

- Set a lower-risk drink limit (stay at the blue BAC level, 0.02-0.06).
- Drink at a moderate pace; one drink per hour is about how much your body can process each hour.
- Drink two or fewer times a week.
- Take a break from drinking for at least one week every month and following any heavy use.
- If you already have a high tolerance...slowly reduce consumption until you are following the lower-risk guidelines discussed above.

Point of Diminishing Returns

Diminishing returns is the idea that the "high" you feel from consuming alcohol is reached at BAC's between .00 and .06, and further drinking does not produce greater euphoria. In fact, it has the *opposite* effect and leads to a greater chance of experiencing negative consequences. **KEEP TO THE BLUE!**

The American Medical Association recommends no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men.

Lower-Risk Drinking Guidelines

Avoiding Negative Consequences

0 Drinks...if you're driving, pregnant, taking medication or have alcohol or other drug dependencies. It's always ok not to drink! This is the lowest-risk choice.

Keep to your BLUE BAC level

0.02 – 0.03 = No loss of coordination, slight euphoria and loss of shyness

0.04 – 0.06 = Feeling of relaxation, lower inhibitions, some minor impairment in reasoning, memory, lowering of cautions

Use your BAC card to see where *your* specific blue level is and how you can stay there.

BAC = Blood Alcohol Concentration and is the percentage of alcohol in the blood as someone drinks. This means that for every 1,000 mililiters of blood, the body contains 1 mililiter of alcohol.

Information adapted from Syndistar, Inc.

"A Drink" = 12 ounces of beer, or 4 ounces of wine, or 1 ounce of hard liquor

What is a hangover? The hangover is characterized by headaches, muscle stiffness, dry mouth, and general aches and pains. The major cause of these effects is dehydration resulting from your liver's efforts to metabolize the alcohol in your system. The severity of a hangover is related to drinking rate, peak BAC, and the amount of alcohol consumed. The faster you drink, the higher your peak BAC, and the more alcohol you consume, the greater your hangover.

To reduce hangovers:

- Stay hydrated by alternating alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages
- Slow absorption by eating before and while drinking
- Stay at the blue level longer by not drinking quickly
- Adopt the "lower-risk" drinking behaviors

BAC's for UVA Students if they drink (Source HPS 2005)

Year	Females	Males	Fraternity	Sorority
First	.09	.09	.12	.10
Second	.06	.08	.12	.07
Third	.06	.07	.10	.08
Fourth	.05	.06	.08	.06