

Alcohol – Facts & research

Effects of alcohol on the body

Quick facts

- Alcohol slows down the activity in the brain and the nervous system.
- Alcoholic drinks get their taste from other substances that are used to make them. For example, beer gets its taste from malt, wine from the type of grape used.
- Alcohol can be called a food because it provides energy. It does not contain protein or vitamins.
- Alcohol does not need to be digested in the stomach. It passes straight into the bloodstream.
- Alcohol is absorbed directly into the bloodstream through the walls of the stomach and small intestine. It is then quickly distributed to all parts of the body, including the brain.
- The liver is the main organ of the body responsible for removing alcohol from the bloodstream.

The short term effects of using alcohol may include:

- relaxation
- reduced concentration
- lack of coordination and slower reflexes
- loss of inhibitions and increased confidence
- flushed appearance
- blurred vision
- slurred speech
- intense moods e.g. aggression, elation, depression
- headache
- sleepiness
- nausea and vomiting
- at high doses – coma and death.



The long term effects of alcohol use may include:

- dependence (alcoholism)
- damage to the heart, stomach and brain
- damage to the liver - cirrhosis, hepatitis and cancer
- weight gain
- sexual impotence and a reduction in fertility
- concentration and short term memory problems
- depression
- family and relationship problems
- poor work performance
- legal and financial problems.

For more information, visit the following interactive websites.

Systems of body and parts of brain/ Interactive body

<http://sciencenetlinks.com/interactives/alcohol/ebook/pages/human-body.htm>