

## UNHAPPY BIRTHDAY

### Salvador's Story

Salvador was one of those guys that everybody liked. He was funny and nice, and he had a reputation for being super-responsible. He didn't smoke, do drugs, or drink. He got good grades and he was on his high school's football team.

In spring of 2012, Salvador was looking forward to two things: His eighteenth birthday and his upcoming high school graduation. He had applied to several colleges and he was hoping to get a football scholarship.

One night in March, Salvador's friends decided to throw him a birthday party. They held the party at another friend's house (her parents were out of town at the time), and they got an older kid to buy them beer and wine.

Salvador wasn't much of a drinker – but he figured a few drinks wouldn't hurt. But every time his friends saw him, he had a drink in his hand. Nobody was worried, though – Salvador was a big guy, so he could probably handle his liquor.

At some point during the party, Salvador started having trouble keeping his eyes open. Eventually, he fell down and hit his head on a table.

Salvador's friends decided to put him on the couch and let him sleep it off.

The next morning, Salvador's friends couldn't wake him up. They called 9-1-1 – but the paramedics couldn't revive him. Salvador had died in his sleep – he choked on his own vomit.

## SAYING "NO"

If you find yourself in a situation where someone is encouraging or pressuring you to binge drink, try one of these lines:

- "Sorry. I'm the designated driver tonight."
- "Drinking makes me feel sick. Do you have any water?"
- "Nah. I'm good right now."

## GETTING HELP

If you or someone you know is addicted to alcohol, it's important that you get help right away.

Here are a few places you can go to learn more about alcohol abuse and addiction:

- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD): [www.sadd.org](http://www.sadd.org)
- Alcoholics Anonymous (AA): [www.aa.org](http://www.aa.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: [www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/BingeDrinking/](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/BingeDrinking/)

## TEST YOURSELF!

How much do you know about binge drinking? Take this quiz to find out:

1. If you're a girl, drinking five or more drinks in two hours is considered binge drinking.  
a. True                      b. False
2. Alcohol can cause brain damage in teens.  
a. True                      b. False
3. It's NEVER okay to let a drunk friend "sleep it off."  
a. True                      b. False
4. Nearly \_\_\_\_\_ people die every year as a result of binge drinking.  
a. 10,000    b. 30,000    c. 50,000    d. 80,000
5. It is not possible to get addicted to alcohol.  
a. True                      b. False

Answers: 1. b; 2. a; 3. a; 4. d; 5. b

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# BINGE DRINKING

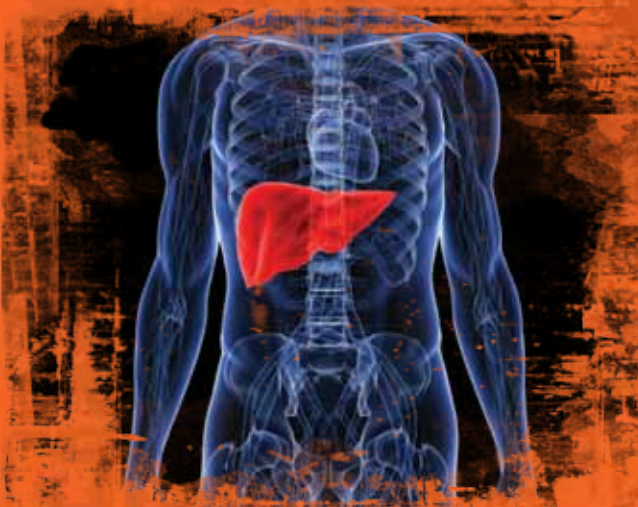


## TOO MUCH, TOO FAST

## WHAT IS BINGE DRINKING?

When you drink a beer, a glass of wine, or a mixed drink, alcohol gets into your bloodstream and heads to your liver, which is the organ responsible for filtering harmful toxins out of your body. Your liver can process about one drink an hour. When you drink more than one drink, your liver has a hard time keeping up. You stumble and slur your words.

That “drunk” feeling is your body’s way of telling you that you’ve had too much alcohol. If you keep drinking, you’re putting yourself at risk for some very serious health problems.



## How Much is “Too Much”?

In general, the term “binge drinking” is used to describe consuming several alcoholic drinks in a short period of time – but how much is “several”? The answer to that question varies from person to person (things like your weight and your age make a difference). In general, though, five drinks or more in about two hours is considered binge drinking if you’re a guy. If you’re a girl, it’s four drinks or more.

In addition to making you feel sick and act stupid, binge drinking can lead to serious consequences, like alcohol poisoning.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly 80,000 people die every year as a result of drinking too much alcohol. What’s more, people who binge drink are also more likely to engage in other risky behaviors, such as driving while intoxicated or having unprotected sex.

## WHAT’S YOUR POISON?

### Binge Drinking and Alcohol Poisoning

When you think of poisons, you probably picture the stuff under your kitchen sink – harsh, nasty-smelling chemicals and bottles with warning labels that say things like “do not drink.”

You’d never drink a bottle of all-purpose cleaner or do a couple shots of some chemical you found on a shelf in the garage – but when you binge drink, you’re basically poisoning yourself.

That’s why when you drink alcohol, your liver starts working right away to filter it out of your system. As we already mentioned, when you drink a lot of alcohol, your liver can’t keep up. When you have several drinks in a short period of time – or binge – you start to feel the physical effects of alcohol on your body, such as:

- Blurred vision
- Slurred speech
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Dizziness

If you keep drinking, you might end up with alcohol poisoning.

The symptoms of alcohol poisoning include:

- Loss of consciousness/passing out
- Hypothermia, or a drop in body temperature
- Mental confusion
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Pale or bluish skin
- Slow breathing

## ALCOHOL, YOUR BODY AND YOUR HEALTH

### The Long-Term Effects of Binge Drinking

You might not consider yourself a drinker, but if you regularly drink at parties or social gatherings, you’re still doing damage to your brain and body. It’s a gradual process: First, it’s a few drinks at a party, just to help you relax. Soon, though, you find that you can’t enjoy a social event without alcohol. Eventually, you start craving alcohol any time you feel tense or anxious. In other words, you become addicted.

Alcohol is a drug – and that means that if you drink regularly, you run the risk of getting hooked on it. You eventually get to the point where you need to drink just to feel normal.

People who are addicted to alcohol are putting themselves at risk for a lifetime of long-term health issues, including:

- Liver disease, such as cirrhosis
- Memory loss
- Brain damage in teens
- Depression
- Greater risk of other health problems such as cancer, heart disease and stroke

## UNDER PRESSURE

### Binge Drinking and Your Social Life

Chances are, you’ve seen at least one funny movie that centers on a bunch of drunk people doing stupid stuff. Some of these movies are about teens or college students and are “coming of age” comedies that make drinking seem like a rite of passage. All of them make drinking seem like a fun, socially acceptable thing to do. They make dumb mistakes, but things always turn out okay in the end. But in real life, when people binge drink, the results aren’t hilarious. They’re usually embarrassing or even dangerous.

Younger people see these movies and think that binge drinking is just a part of growing up. The truth is, though, you don’t need alcohol to have a good time. There are tons of things you can do instead of drinking:

- Study
- See a movie
- Play video games
- Go to the mall
- Work out

## FRIENDS DON’T LET FRIENDS “SLEEP IT OFF”

If you ever notice that a friend has any of the symptoms of alcohol poisoning, it’s critical that you get help right away. Call an ambulance, dial 9-1-1, or get in touch with a trusted adult – don’t wait.

No matter what you do, though, never – ever – let a friend “sleep it off” if you suspect that they have alcohol poisoning. Try to keep them awake and moving, or get medical attention right away. If you let them sleep, they may never wake up.

