

# Alcohol Use Over the Holidays

Many people consider alcohol to be an essential part of holiday festivities. However, between the parties and constant stream of alcoholic beverages, drinking over the holidays can quickly spiral out of control. Holiday binge drinking is a problem that occurs in many American households every year. Despite how quickly the holidays may pass, excessive drinking over a short period of time can still take its toll. The short-term effects of alcohol abuse can not only detract from your holiday experience but can often lead to increased relationship conflict, health consequences, and possibly problems with law enforcement.

Ways to avoid binge drinking over the holidays:

**Remember you do not need alcohol to have fun.** You may think that the holidays without alcohol is boring. However, the fact is that alcohol is a depressant and will eventually slow you down. Avoiding alcohol or drinking minimally can preserve your energy and help you power through the festivities.

**Still make the fun mixed drinks just without the alcohol.** Resist the pressure to drink just because alcohol is available. Drinking water or club soda is a nice alternative and doesn't give you the high sugar content of a cola.

**Stay away from the bar.** Avoiding the bar is a good way to avoid binge drinking. If you hang around the bar area, it's easy to convince yourself that one more drink won't hurt.

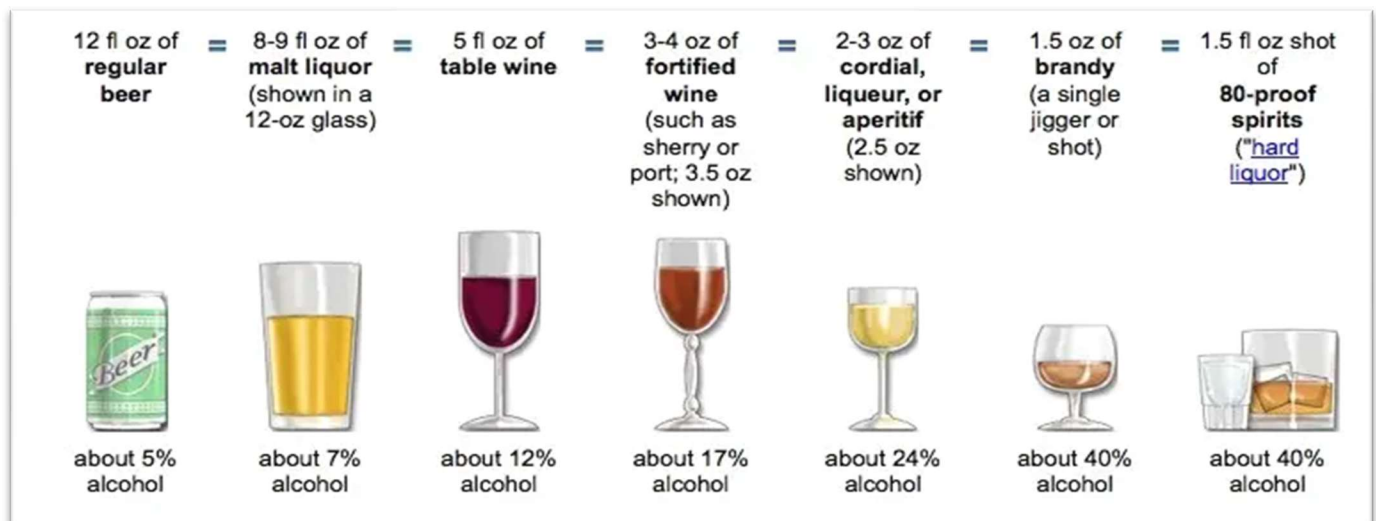
**If you choose to drink, use moderation.** Alcohol should complement the holidays, not rule it. Sometimes it is easy to lose sight of how much alcohol you're consuming at holiday celebrations. Remember that drinking alcohol is a choice, not a requirement. Try to stop yourself before you go overboard.

**Decide what your limit is beforehand.** It is a good idea to decide how many drinks you will drink at the holiday party and stick to that number. Tell family and friends beforehand what your alcohol use plan is, so that you have some accountability.

**If you drink, make a plan ahead of time.** If you are drinking alcohol, always have a designated driver. This is someone who hasn't drunk any alcohol, at all! Not the person who has drunk the least. Make the commitment to yourself never to drink and drive.

Around the holidays, alcohol consumption can skyrocket even for mild to moderate drinkers. This activity can start out enjoyable, but quickly become a dangerous and often deadly activity. Not only do people drink more during the holiday season, but there are more cars on the road, more people driving late at night, and during the winter months, more bad weather.

Be safe and happy holidays!



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