

WHAT ALCOHOL DOES TO THE BODY

Alcohol is a substance found in drinks such as wine, beer, and liquors. When people drink alcohol, the level of alcohol in their blood rises. This quickly changes the way the person feels and acts. Alcohol affects the body in a number of ways, depending on how much and how often a person drinks. It affects smaller people often more quickly than larger people. After one drink, reflexes slow down and the person cannot concentrate as easily. After two drinks, a person may begin to forget things. A person who has had four drinks is seven times more likely to get into an accident if they drive.

Alcohol is illegal for young people to use but legal for adults. Many adults drink alcohol responsibly as part of religious ceremonies or celebrations such as weddings. Most adults who drink responsibly do not have serious problems because of alcohol. However, some people drink too much alcohol or they drink it too often. They may drink to relax or to hide from feelings or problems. When alcohol is used for these reasons, it can be a problem. The more a person drinks, the harder it is to stop. Some people become addicted to alcohol. These people are called alcoholics. Many alcoholics become mean or violent when they drink.

Young people often believe that drinking alcohol will make it easier to have fun. They may feel pressured by friends to drink, or they may think that drinking alcohol makes them seem grown up. However, alcohol affects the body systems of young people in unpleasant ways. It causes blurred vision, slurred speech, dizziness and memory loss. A few drinks can make it difficult for a young person to walk steadily or to think clearly. When they drink, young people often say or do embarrassing things that they regret later. They may also develop a bad habit that is very hard to break.

Over time, alcohol damages the body. It poisons the liver and pancreas, two important organs that are needed to keep the body functioning properly. Many problem drinkers end up with a condition known as cirrhosis of the liver. This disease can cause the liver to stop working properly, resulting in death. Alcohol also destroys brain cells and causes the heart to beat faster than normal. This can result in brain damage or heart disease. Also, people who drink too much alcohol may not eat properly. They then become ill from poor nutrition. While a person might feel good for a short time after drinking alcohol, the effects usually go from good to bad very quickly.

QUESTIONS

1. When a person drinks alcohol, the level of alcohol rises in his or her
 - a. brain.
 - b. heart.
 - c. blood.
 - d. All of the above

2. Which person is most likely to be affected by alcohol sooner?
 - a. a small person
 - b. a large person
 - c. an adult
 - d. a man

3. What can happen to a person after one drink?
 - a. Reflexes can become slow.
 - b. The person may have trouble concentrating.
 - c. Both
 - d. Neither

4. After four drinks, a person is _____ times more likely to get into an accident if he or she is driving.

5. Who can drink alcohol legally?
 - a. an adult
 - b. a teenager
 - c. a person with a drinking license
 - d. It is not legal for anyone to drink alcohol.

6. What is one reason that young people might drink alcohol?

7. List three ways that alcohol can immediately affect the body.

Name _____



Date _____

8. List three ways that alcohol can affect the body over time.

9. A disease that many chronic alcohol drinkers get is

- a. bronchitis.
- b. Crohn's disease
- c. cirrhosis of the liver.
- d. hepatitis.

10. Alcohol can also cause

- a. heart disease.
- b. brain damage.
- c. poor nutrition.
- d. All of the above

ANSWERS

1. c
2. a
3. c
4. seven
5. a
6. Possible answers include:
 - They believe that drinking alcohol will make it easier to have fun.
 - They may feel pressured by friends to drink.
 - They may think that drinking alcohol makes them seem grown up.
7. Answer should include three of the following: blurred vision, slurred speech, dizziness, memory loss, difficulty walking steadily, difficulty thinking clearly, saying or doing embarrassing things that are later regretted, developing a bad habit that is very hard to break.
8. Answer should include three of the following:
 - It poisons the liver and pancreas.
 - It causes cirrhosis of the liver.
 - It destroys brain cells
 - It causes the heart to beat faster than normal.
 - It can cause brain damage.
 - It can cause heart disease.
 - People who drink too much alcohol may not eat properly.
9. c
10. d