A Word of Caution
Alcohol is frequently associated with many violent crimes, such as homicides and serious assaults, as well as a high percentage of sex-related crimes. Be careful: sedative drugs can be mixed in an alcoholic drink (or non-alcoholic beverage) without your knowledge, rendering you incapacitated and unable to prevent a crime or resist a sexual assault.

For More Information
Alcoholics Anonymous
(212) 870-3400
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org
Aid to Alcoholics and Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters
(888) 4AL-ANON (425-2666)
www.al-anon-alateen.org
American Council on Alcoholism
(800) 527-5344
www.aca-usa.org/college.htm
College Drinking — Changing the Culture
www.collegedrinkingprevention.gov
National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
24/7 Hotline: (800) 729-6686
Spanish: (877) 767-8432
TDD: (800) 487-4889
www.health.org
National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence
(212) 269-7797
24/7 referrals: (800) NCA-CALL
(622-2255)
www.ncadd.org
National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse
www.niaaa.nih.gov
Take a free online anonymous screening at
www.alcoholessential.org

American College Health Association
P.O. Box 28937
Baltimore, MD 21240-8937
(410) 859-1500 / www.acha.org

It is illegal to reprint or reproduce this brochure. Additional copies can be obtained by contacting the American College Health Association. Stock imagery is used for illustrative purposes only. People depicted are models.

© Copyright April 2008, American College Health Association.
This brochure is for informational purposes only and is not meant to
In college, you will probably find yourself in situations where you will be making decisions about drinking — at parties, on dates, in your room. It is best to make careful, thoughtful decisions about alcohol before you drink for the first time or before you have your first drink at a party or an event.

Careless decisions about drinking can have harmful results. Alcohol use can impair your judgment, which can lead to unsafe decisions about sex, poor grades, getting into fights, and sexual assault. Experiencing such consequences and continuing to use alcohol may increase your risk of developing a long-term drinking problem.

Alcohol Quiz

Understanding how alcohol interacts with your body and how it can affect your judgment is an important first step. Learn how accurate your knowledge is by answering the "true or false" questions below:

1. ALCOHOL IS A SEXUAL STIMULANT.
   False. Increasing your alcohol intake actually decreases your ability to function sexually. Although you may be less inhibited, you are less likely to be able to follow through. Alcohol also weakens your defenses and limits your ability to communicate effectively, leading to unhealthy decisions about sex, including unsafe sex, unintended pregnancy, date rape, or a sexually transmitted infection.

2. IT IS OKAY TO MIX ALCOHOL WITH OTHER DRUGS.
   False. Alcohol can cause negative and potentially fatal reactions in people taking some prescriptions or illegal drugs. In addition, mixing alcohol with depressants is especially risky.

3. DRINKING ONLY BEER OR WINE IS LESS RISKY THAN DRINKING LIQUOR.
   False. A 12 oz. beer or wine cooler, a 4 oz. glass of wine, a shot of liquor, or a mixed drink with one shot of liquor all have about the same amount of pure alcohol. Regardless of the form of the drink, the same amount of alcohol is entering your body.

4. THERE IS NO WAY TO SOBER UP QUICKLY.
   True. Time is the only sobering agent — not coffee, cold showers, vomiting, or any other remedy you may have heard. To become sober your liver must metabolize the alcohol, and this is a slow process. It will take one hour for a male weighing 150 lbs. to metabolize the alcohol in a standard drink (beer, wine cooler, glass of wine, shot of liquor, or mixed drink). Your weight, health, gender, and age will affect how quickly you can metabolize the alcohol.

5. YOU CAN HAVE TWO OR THREE DRINKS WITHOUT YOUR BEHAVIOR OR JUDGMENT CHANGING NOTICEABLY.
   False. Alcohol changes your behavior and judgment starting with your first drink. The impact of two, three, or any number of drinks varies in response to social and physical factors. Social factors include your mood, the people, the setting, the time, and the expectations of drinking. Physical factors include your weight, the amount of rest you have had, how quickly the alcohol enters your system, your health, and your gender. Women usually feel the effects of alcohol faster than men even when compared to men of the same weight. Hormone levels and the use of oral contraceptives also play a role in this process.
Sticking to Your Limits
The decision of when, where, and why you drink is yours. It should not be dependent on the drinking habits of others. Higher-risk drinking (five drinks per drinking session for men and four for women) is more prevalent among college students than non-students.

Did you know that most long-term and heavy drinkers began as social drinkers and never planned for long-term or heavy alcohol use?

You can stay in control of situations that involve alcohol even though others may pressure you to change your mind. Here are some helpful tips:

- It is always okay to say no to a drink. Be polite but firm in your refusal and maintain eye contact. If the offer is repeated, you can still stick to your decision. In some instances, you might need to walk away or reverse the pressure with a comment such as, “Why is it so important to you that I have a drink?”
- Before entering a bar or other place where alcohol is available, decide how much you plan to drink. Know what non-alcoholic beverage you will drink once you reach your alcohol limit.
- Get involved in a range of enjoyable activities. This will help you make friendships that are not focused on alcohol and enable you to suggest activities to friends with whom you habitually drink. Some of the friends urging you to drink might have drinking problems themselves. For information about helping them, talk to a counselor or health care provider on campus or in the community.

Staying in Control
The best way to stay in control in any situation is not to consume alcohol. But if you do choose to drink:

- Avoid drinking games, which may cause you to drink too much too quickly.
- Pace your drinks to one or fewer per hour.
- Keep track of how many drinks you are having.
- Determine in advance not to exceed a set number of drinks.
- Drink an alcohol look-alike.
- Alternate non-alcoholic drinks with those containing alcohol.
- Use a designated driver.
- Eat before or during drinking.
- Sip drinks slowly.
- Avoid salty foods (such as peanuts or popcorn) that make you want to drink more.
- Avoid spiked punch and other drinks containing unknown amounts of alcohol.

Consequences to Drinking
The minimum drinking age in all states and the District of Columbia is 21. If you drink before you are 21, you may face legal and academic consequences. Also, because alcohol impairs your mental and physical responses, driving under the influence (DUI) increases your chances of a traffic violation or crash.

Penalties for underage drinking and DUI may include:

- fines and legal fees (these may be hundreds or even thousands of dollars)
- a period of probation or community service
- being suspended or expelled from your school
- having your driver’s license suspended or revoked or your driving privileges restricted
- damaging effects on your future career choices
Drinking Habits

Compare your drinking habits to those below to see how you use alcohol. It is not necessary for a person to have every behavior to fit into a category. Also, social drinkers do not ordinarily become problem drinkers, and problem drinkers do not have to become alcohol dependent.

MODERATE DRINKERS TYPICALLY:
- Drink slowly (no fast gulping)
- Know when to stop drinking (do not drink to get drunk)
- Eat before or while drinking
- Never drive after drinking
- Respect nondrinkers
- Know and obey laws related to drinking

PROBLEM DRINKERS TYPICALLY:
- Frequently drink to get drunk
- Try to "solve" problems by drinking
- Experience personality changes — may become loud, angry, or violent, or silent, remote, or reclusive
- Drink when they should not — before driving or going to class or work
- Cause other problems — harm themselves, family, friends, and strangers
- Keep drinking despite the continued negative consequences
- May have "blackouts" — cannot remember what they did while drinking although they may have appeared "normal" to people at the time
- Miss work or skip class as a result of hangovers or choosing to drink

PEOPLE ADDICTED TO ALCOHOL TYPICALLY:
- Spend a lot of time thinking about drinking and planning when and when to get the next drink
- Keep bottles hidden for quick pick-me-ups
- Start drinking without conscious planning and lose awareness of the amount consumed
- Deny drinking
- Often drink alone
- Feel the need to drink before stressful situations
- May have "blackouts" — cannot remember what they did while drinking although they may have appeared "normal" to people at the time
- Miss work or skip class as a result of hangovers or choosing to drink
- Go from having hangovers to more dangerous withdrawal symptoms, such as delirium tremens ("DTs"), which can be fatal
- Have or cause major problems with the police.

How Do I Know If My Alcohol Use Is Hurting Me?

Having the facts is only part of making careful decisions about alcohol use. You can analyze your attitudes and behavior by answering the following questions.

1. Are you unable to stop drinking after a certain number of drinks?
2. Do you need a drink to get motivated?
3. Do you often forget what happened while you were partying (memory blackouts)?
4. Do you drink alone?
5. Have others annoyed you by criticizing your alcohol use?
6. Have you been involved in fights while you were drinking?
7. Have you done or said anything while drinking that you later regretted?
8. Have you destroyed or damaged property while drinking?
9. Do you drive after drinking?
10. Have you been in trouble with campus authorities or the police because of your drinking?
11. Have you dropped or chosen friends based on their drinking habits?
12. Do you think you are a normal drinker despite friends' comments that you drink too much?
13. Have you ever done poorly on an exam or assignment because of drinking?
14. Have you ever missed classes because you were too hungover to get up on time?
15. Do you think about drinking a lot?
16. Do you feel guilty or self-conscious about your drinking?
17. Do you continue drinking despite the continued negative consequences?

If you answered "yes" to three or more, or if your answer to any of the questions concerns you, you may be using alcohol in ways that are harmful. If you think you have or might be developing problems in which drinking plays a part, act now. You can get help.