

Living Safely

with disabilities and special health needs

Preventing Alcohol Poisoning

Drinking too much alcohol can cause you to become very sick and may lead to hospitalization and long-lasting health problems. The effects of alcohol overdose can happen in a very short amount of time.

Alcohol overdose is also known as alcohol poisoning. Anyone who drinks alcohol is at risk of overdose.

Never give alcohol to children or pets. They are sensitive to alcohol and may suffer serious health effects following drinking even small amounts of alcohol.

Signs of alcohol poisoning include:

- Mental confusion, being extremely dazed, unconscious or in a coma (the person cannot be woken up)
- Slow or irregular breathing and heart rate
- Blueish, pale skin color or low body temperature (hypothermia)
- Increased blood pressure
- Vomiting
- Seizures

Mixing alcohol and medication can be dangerous. Mixing some medications with alcohol can cause drowsiness or other side effects such as nausea. Some side effects can be severe. If you take medication, ask your health care provider if you can drink alcohol.

The effects of alcohol can sometimes take time before they show up in a person. There are many things that may impact the length of time between drinking alcohol and feeling its effects. These can include the person's gender, weight, how much food is in the stomach, interactions with medications, and more.

It is very important not to drive after drinking alcohol. Alcohol can make a person's reactions slower and can impair a person's driving. Driving after drinking can lead to deadly accidents. More information on preventing drunk driving can be obtained by visiting the Mothers Against Drunk Driving website at www.madd.org.

There are ways to help prevent alcohol overdose. Using these practices could mean the difference between life and death.

People often count the number of drinks they are consuming. However, alcohol consumption is about the percentage of alcohol (volume of alcohol) in each drink. This information is printed on the bottle or container.

Alcohol poisoning is a medical emergency that requires immediate help. A person who appears to be very drunk or is asleep may be showing early signs of alcohol poisoning and be in real danger. A person who appears to be sleeping may be unconscious and in a coma. Do not miss this warning sign.

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If the person is unconscious, not breathing, hard to wake up, or having a seizure, immediately call 911.

If you have a concern about the effects of alcohol, alcohol overdose/poisoning, or alcohol-related illnesses, call your local poison control center right away for help.

Contact the New Jersey Poison Control Center anytime at 1-800-222-1222; Text 973-339-0702.

Poison control centers focus on making sure callers are safe. These calls are free and confidential.

We value the expertise of our partners in safety who have demonstrated their commitment to inclusive healthy communities. Portions of this resource have been adapted from the New Jersey Poison Information and Education System (www.njpies.org) and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (www.madd.org).

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