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Lesson 2: Alcohol and Your Body

This lesson can be used individually or in sequence with Lessons 1 and 3.

OBJECTIVE

Students will learn about the harmful effects of alcohol on different parts of the body.

MATERIALS

[Worksheet 2 printable](#) (PDF)

[Worksheet Answer Key](#) (PDF)

Time Required: 20 minutes, with additional time for classroom discussion

SET UP AND PREPARE

Skills Covered: Reading Comprehension/Critical Thinking

Key Concepts: When a person drinks alcohol, it is absorbed into the bloodstream and affects nearly every organ system in the body. Alcohol can have short-term effects on the body, such as a stomachache. Long-term abuse can damage vital organs such as the heart, liver, kidneys, and stomach. This damage can lead to potentially deadly diseases such as kidney failure or cirrhosis of the liver. The effects of alcohol on an individual's body depend on many factors, including age, weight, gender, and genetics.

DIRECTIONS

Discussion: *What parts of the body other than the brain do you think are affected by alcohol? Do you think alcohol can harm organs in your body? Do you think underage drinking can be deadly? Have students complete the Student Worksheet individually or in small groups.*

Critical Thinking: *What long-term effects does drinking alcohol have on the body? How does drinking alcohol make you more susceptible to potentially deadly conditions? How do you think abusing alcohol would affect your appearance over time?*

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Worksheets Answer Key:

Assessment Quiz: What Do You Know About Alcohol? 1. True; 2. False; 3. True; 4. True; 5. True; 6. False; 7. False; 8. True

Worksheet 1: Alcohol and Your Brain 1. Cerebral Cortex; 2. Hippocampus; 3. It can shut down the medulla, which controls involuntary processes, such as maintaining body temperature and breathing.

Worksheet 2: Alcohol and Your Body 1. a; 2. a; 3. c; 4. b

Worksheet 3: Making Smart Choices

1. Answers may vary but may include that the effect on your brain that makes you less inhibited also impairs your ability to think clearly. You may make decisions without thinking about the consequences. You may do something that you would later regret.
2. Answers may vary but may include that drinking alcohol can slow your reflexes and blur your vision, making driving very dangerous. Sally should not get into the car if her sister or any other friends who were drinking are driving.

Critical Thinking: Answers may vary but should include that young people may be more affected by alcohol than older people because their brains are still developing and their bodies are smaller.

Alcohol and Your Body

• What to Know •

When a person drinks alcohol, it is absorbed into the bloodstream within minutes and affects nearly every organ system in the body. How alcohol affects people depends on a number of factors, such as:

- The same amount of alcohol more strongly affects a person who weighs less than a heavier person
- Because their bodies are still developing, young people are more at risk for some types of alcohol damage
- The same amount of alcohol typically affects women more than it does men.

On the right, read through facts about the effects of alcohol on the body. Then test what you know by choosing the correct answers below.

1. Which organ breaks down alcohol?

- a. Liver c. Heart
b. Kidneys d. Lungs

2. Over time, alcohol can make it difficult for the body to soak up bone-building ____.

- a. calcium c. oxygen
b. enamel d. carbon

3. Alcohol causes your ____.

- a. liver to produce more urine.
b. heart to produce more blood.
c. stomach to produce more acid.
d. stomach to produce more urine.

4. Which of the following statements is FALSE?

- a. Long-term alcohol abuse may lead to cancer.
b. Drinking alcohol over a long period of time decreases blood pressure.
c. Alcohol affects nearly every organ system in the body.
d. Abusing alcohol over a long period of time can make acne worse.

Heart



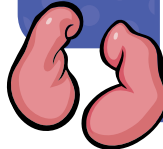
Alcohol causes the heart rate to slow. Heavy drinking over a long period of time can also increase the risk of heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure.¹

Stomach



Alcohol can give you an upset stomach because it makes you produce more stomach acid. Drinking a lot of alcohol over a long period of time can damage the lining of the stomach—causing ulcers or stomach cancer.

Kidneys



Drinking alcohol causes your body to produce more urine, making your kidneys work overtime. Heavy drinking over a long period of time may lead to kidney failure.

Skin



Drinking alcohol can give your skin a red appearance similar to blushing because it allows more blood to flow near the skin surface. Drinking a lot of alcohol over a long period of time can cause acne to become worse and make your skin look puffy.

Eyes



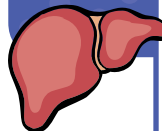
Alcohol can blur your eyesight. Your pupils (the black center of the eye) may get small, making it difficult for your eyes to adjust to light.

Bones



Drinking a lot of alcohol over a long period of time makes it more difficult for the body to soak up bone-building calcium. Eventually, that makes the bones thinner and easier to break.

Liver



Your liver is a critical organ; it helps filter poisons out of the blood and makes body-building proteins. Your liver breaks down alcohol so that your body can get rid of it. Heavy drinking over a long period of time can permanently damage your liver, causing a disease called cirrhosis.

¹ NIAAA, www.niaaa.nih.gov/FAQs/General-English.

Fast Fact

The word “intoxicated” refers to the fact that alcohol is toxic, or hazardous, to the body.