



## Enjoy the Holidays – Stay Sober

Alcohol-impaired driving is a larger problem than many people realize. In a recent study, nearly 160 million Americans admitted to driving even though they were alcohol-impaired, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

There is a good reason why people tell you to not drive when you have been drinking. Casual drinking can impair your judgment. After consuming just a couple beers, you might have a blood level alcohol level high enough to categorize you as drunk.

Alcohol is quickly absorbed into your bloodstream and travels to every part of your body. When it reaches your brain, you might feel relaxed. But what you are really experiencing is a loss of sensation and a decrease in thinking skills.

Because it is a depressant, alcohol dulls your senses, slows your reaction times, and affects your ability to make good decisions. It causes a loss of muscle coordination and balance. Many people who drink have more difficulty walking, seeing, hearing, and speaking than usual.

An occasional drink at social events might be fine for some people who do not have addictive tendencies. But you should not drive if you have had more than one drink (for women) or two drinks (for men).

*National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 2008.*

For alcohol-free recipes, visit [www.drinksmixer.com](http://www.drinksmixer.com) and [www.maddorangecounty.org/drinks.htm](http://www.maddorangecounty.org/drinks.htm)

### How to Host a Responsible Party

Here are ways you can have an enjoyable party and encourage people to say sober.

- **Provide non-salty foods** such as fruit, vegetables, unsalted nuts, baked chips, and healthful desserts.
- **Serve festive, alcohol-free drinks**, such as a hot-mulled cider with cinnamon sticks or cranberry-lemon punch.
- **Place individual bottles of water and sparkling juice** within easy reach of all guests.

#### If you serve alcohol:

- Serve food before you serve alcoholic drinks.
- Don't have an open bar. Designate one person to serve drinks – responsibly.
- Limit the alcohol you serve guests. Women should consume no more than 1 drink, and men no more than 2 drinks – served an hour apart.
- Stop serving alcohol well before you want your party to end. Bring out the hot cider and coffee and focus on conversation and entertainment.

**Don't serve alcohol to someone who is intoxicated. Not only is it your moral obligation, it's against the law – regardless of whether they are planning to drive.**

When you serve alcohol, you can be held responsible for an intoxicated person's actions. Make sure guests who have been drinking have a safe way home – with a designated driver, taxi, or public transportation.

#### One Drink Is Defined As: Amount

One can or bottle of beer	12 oz.
A glass of wine	4-5 oz.
A shot of liquor/mixed drink	1-1.5 oz.

*Distilled Spirits Council of the United States. 2008.*



## Vitamin B12 Is Important for Brain Health

Recent headlines declared that a vegetarian diet could be bad for the brain. What researchers actually learned was that individuals with low (but still normal) levels of vitamin B12 were 6.17 times more likely to show significant brain shrinkage compared to those with the highest B12 levels.

Many studies have shown that vegans have lower-than-average vitamin B12 levels. It is recommended that healthy adults get 2.4 mcg of B12

daily. But as people age, their ability to absorb vitamin B12 is impaired, so people over age 50 may need 500-1,000 mcg/day.

Reliable food sources of B12 are dairy, eggs, and meat. Some foods have vitamin B12 added (e.g., fortified breakfast cereals, soymilk, meat alternates, and Brewer's yeast). Vegans and vegetarians should consciously work on eating enough B12 and have their B12 levels checked.

*Neurology. Sep. 9, 2008.*

### Sources of Vitamin B12

Serving	mcg	Serving	mcg
Herring, 3.5 oz	10.0	Egg, 1	0.5
Salmon, 3.5 oz	2.5	Brewer's yeast with B12, 2T	0.5
Beef, 3.5 oz	2.5	Chicken, 3.5 oz	0.3
Yogurt, 1 C	1.4	Cheddar cheese, 1 oz	0.2
Milk, 1 C	0.9	Fruits & vegetables	0.0
Cottage cheese, ½ C	0.8	Legumes, nuts, & grains	0.0
Feta cheese, ¼ C	0.6		
Swiss cheese, 1 oz	0.5		

**Aim to eat at least 2.4 mcg of B12 daily.**



## Sunshine Helps You Live Longer

Is it possible that you could die early from a lack of sunshine? A new large study estimates that up to half of all Americans have vitamin D levels low enough to shorten their life. The study measured vitamin D levels in more than 3,000 people. During the study, people who had deficient vitamin D levels were more than twice as likely to die as people with healthy levels. The risk of heart disease was also 82% higher.

The easiest way to increase vitamin D levels is to spend 10-15 minutes a day with a good portion of your body's skin exposed to direct sunlight. Your body manufactures all the vitamin D it can in the first 10-15 minutes of exposure. To get the maximum amount of vitamin D from sunlight, aim for two 10-minute sessions daily, separated by several hours. Longer exposure is not beneficial and may result in sunburn.

People living in northern states will not get adequate sun exposure in the winter. The sun is not high enough in the sky and ultraviolet rays that make vitamin D are filtered out in the atmosphere. In this study, blood vitamin D levels dropped by 89% from August to March.

Most vitamin D researchers recommend taking at least 1,000-2,000 IU of vitamin D daily in the winter, or every day if you are not in the sunshine regularly.

*Archives of Internal Medicine. June 23, 2008.*

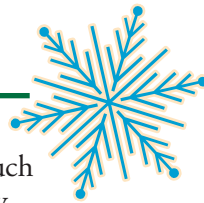
If you don't know what your vitamin D level is, ask your doctor for a blood test. If your level is below 30 ng/mL (or 73 nmol/L), you need to take preventive steps to improve it.

### Emerging Norms for Vitamin D

Vitamin D Status	ng/mL*	nmol/L*
Deficient (high risk)	<20	<50
Insufficient (moderate risk)	20-29	50-72
Desired (low risk)	30+	73+

\*Vitamin D test results are shown in these two units.

## Have a Happy, Healthy Holiday



A national survey identified the top three holiday stressors as: finances, missing a loved one who has died, and having too much to do. Here are tips to help you keep your holiday season merry.

- **Keep your expectations realistic.** No holiday is perfect – not yours, and not anyone else's.
- **Keep things in perspective.** You don't have to buy expensive gifts. And you shouldn't feel obligated to give gifts to your coworkers or boss.
- Before you head out to the mall, **make a detailed list of what you plan to buy** and where you plan to buy it. You'll save time and money.
- **Walk the mall** at a pace rapid enough to fit your exercise needs.
- When you go out shopping for presents, **take a healthy snack with you.** You don't want to find yourself choosing between a deep-fried delight or a quick-to-grab sugary treat.
- Holidays can intensify feelings of loss. **Give yourself permission to grieve your loved one,** as well as permission to have fun. Laughter and joy are not disrespectful.
- **Make sure you get enough sleep** – at least 7 hours each day.
- **Keep fire safety in mind** when you decorate and make sure your home has working smoke alarms installed on every level.
- **Focus on healthy foods:** vegetables, whole grains, and low-fat proteins. Many vegetables make attractive appetizers, as well as accompaniments to main dishes. If you serve potatoes, bake them instead of mashing them.
- **Drink plenty of water.** Add lime slices for a festive touch.
- **Spend time with those you love** – especially your children.
- After a holiday meal, **take the whole family out for a walk,** or put on your favorite holiday music and dance.

Get more fire safety tips at: [www.firesafety.gov/citizens/firesafety/holiday.shtm](http://www.firesafety.gov/citizens/firesafety/holiday.shtm)



*Mental Health America. 2008.*

## ASK THE WELLNESS DOCTOR

**Q:** My blood pressure is 130/83. Should I be concerned?

**A:** Go to [wellsource.info/wn/ask-hypertension.pdf](http://wellsource.info/wn/ask-hypertension.pdf) to read the entire answer from Don Hall, DrPH, CHES. To ask your question, email: [well@wellsource.com](mailto:well@wellsource.com), subject line: Ask the Wellness Doctor. Emails with any other subject line will be directed to the spam folder.

**Health Challenge™:** "Lower Your Stress" available at: [wellsource.info/wn/hc-stress.pdf](http://wellsource.info/wn/hc-stress.pdf). Do at least one stress-relieving activity every day. Ideas to try include: exercise vigorously, practice deep breathing, listen to calming music, set realistic goals, talk with a trusted friend, say "No" to requests you have no time for, eat healthfully, get enough sleep, and do something fun.