

## Reducing Your Risks

Alcohol is a depressant that works on the central nervous system. A little acts like a mild tranquilizer, it relaxes us. Higher levels of alcohol in the blood tend to depress brain activity, reduce our inhibitions and our self control. It will sharply alter our behavior and personality, and can severely affect our judgment and dull our reaction time and sensory perceptions. Higher levels of alcohol in the blood system from steady, heavy drinking can anesthetize the deepest levels of the brain and can result in coma and in some instances even death.

In the majority of rapes on college campuses, both parties involved had been drinking - often to excess. Alcohol lowers inhibitions and can often heighten the desire for sexual activity. Those who expect sex after they have been drinking may use force if they encounter resistance.

Fifty-five percent of the college men who acknowledged committing sexual assault on a date reported being under the influence of alcohol at the time of the assault. In the same study, 53 percent of the college women who experienced sexual aggression on a date reported that they were under the influence at the time of the assault.

Communication also suffers when alcohol is involved. It is hard enough to communicate about sex when sober. Trying to communicate and make good decisions when drinking is impossible for most people.

### Preventative Measures You Can Take

**Set limits for yourself.** When you go out for the night, decide whether or not you are going to drink and how much you want to drink. When you reach your set limit, stop drinking.

**Use the buddy system.** Go with a group of friends who agree to account for each other.

**Don't count on your friends to take care of you.** You are ultimately responsible for yourself.

**Have a backup plan.** Anticipate what could happen throughout the night and how you will handle these things. Keep enough money in your pocket for a phone call and a cab ride—just in case.

**If someone is doing something that you don't want him/her to do, communicate your feelings to him/her.** Do not hesitate to say "no" a number of times. Be straightforward with your feelings. Yell for help and fight back if the person is becoming violent with you.

### Believe that your body belongs to you

You don't have to do anything that you don't want to do with it.

### It's okay to say that you are unsure of what you want

### Trust your instincts

The moment you feel uncomfortable, take action. If saying that you want to stop does not stop the unwanted behavior, don't be afraid to make a scene. Protect yourself.

- Remember that some men think that drinking heavily, dressing provocatively, or going to a man's room indicates a willingness to have sex. Be especially careful to communicate your limits and intentions clearly in such situations.
- Don't be afraid to "make waves" if you feel threatened. If you feel you are being pressured or coerced into sexual activity against your will, don't hesitate to state your feelings and get out of the situation. Better a few minutes of social awkwardness or embarrassment than the trauma of sexual assault.

## **In Order to Protect Yourself**

- Watch your drink as it is being prepared.
- Drink from tamper-proof bottles and cans.
- Avoid large mouth plastic cups.
- Hold your drink at all times—do not leave it unattended.

**Be willing to evaluate yourself.** One of the keys to making sure that you are doing okay is to do an on-going evaluation of your behavior:

 Are you making good choices?

 Are you having fun?

 Are you getting positive results?

**If you find that at times you are at risk, work on changing your behavior.**

## **What About Your Friends?**

Do you cover for one another?

Do you express concern for those you see abusing alcohol and themselves?

How do you help?

Do you laugh and tell stories about wild things that happened? Use humor to overcome fear?

What would you do if something happened that you could have prevented? Are you really being a friend?