

Alcohol Overdose

Alcohol overdose, also known as alcohol poisoning, is a serious consequence of drinking too much. Alcohol is a depressant that affects the nerves that control involuntary functions like your breathing and gag reflex. Too much alcohol can make these functions shut down.

Alcohol overdose is a medical emergency. It is better to get help for your friend than risk not having them wake up in the morning. A person's BAC can still be rising even if they have passed out. Don't let someone just "sleep it off." If someone has passed out after drinking alcohol, you want to regularly check on the person to make sure they are okay.

To check for an alcohol overdose, remember your ABCDE's:

- **A: Awake**—Attempt to wake the person up: Call their name, shake them, pinch their skin. If they don't respond, or wake up but are confused and can't answer a simple question, **turn them on their side** so they don't choke if they vomit.
- **B: Breathing**—Check the person's breathing by looking for their chest to rise and fall or feeling if air is coming out of their nose and mouth. **The 10 Rule:** if there are fewer than 10 breaths in one minute or more than 10 seconds between an inhale and an exhale, their respiratory system is depressing rapidly and they need medical attention.
- **C: Circulation**—Check the person's pulse on their neck or wrist. You can also see if their skin is cold, clammy, or a blue or grayish color.
- **D: Don't leave the person alone**—Keep them laying on their side and stay with them.
- **E: Emergency Assistance**—If you discover **ANY** of the above problems or have any concerns about someone, **CALL 911 IMMEDIATELY**. It is always better to be safe than sorry.

Fear of getting in trouble with police or campus officials may deter some students from calling for help if a friend is in trouble after drinking alcohol, especially if they are under 21. **Do not hesitate to call for help if you are concerned about a friend.** Police and/or University staff will often take into account that you took steps to do the right thing when determining what type of punishment, if any, to issue. It is always better to call for help instead of risking a friend dying or being seriously injured.