



Alcohol Use: Making Safe, Healthy Choices

College drinking may not be as common as you think it is...

Some people assume that excessive alcohol use is a standard part of the college experience, maybe even a rite of passage. However, research findings would challenge this assumption.

According to 2016 statistics gathered by the **National College Health Assessment (NCHA)**, a nationally recognized research survey, over 37% of college students never or rarely drink alcohol.

According to the **2017 UNH National College Health Assessment/Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Survey (NCHA/ATOD)**, both male and female students over-estimated how much other students were drinking on campus: they assumed that others were drinking about 6 drinks at parties; however, males actually reported drinking an average of 2-3 drinks, and females reported drinking an average of 3 drinks per party. High-risk drinking was also not as common as one might expect: only 16.9% of females and 16.9% of males reported drinking 5+ drinks on one occasion within the past two weeks.

How is risky drinking defined?

According to the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**, “at-risk” or “heavy” drinking is more than four drinks a day for men and more than three drinks in a day for women. The NIH also recommends no more than 14 drinks per week for men and no more than 7 drinks a week for women. (Even within these limits, drinkers can have problems if they drink too quickly, have health problems, or are over age 65.)



According to the **NIH**, the majority of adults in the United States do not drink alcohol or drink within low-risk limits:

- 35% never drink
- 37% always drink within low-risk limits
- 19% drink either more than the single-day limits or the weekly limits
- 9% drink more than both the single-day limits and weekly limits

Underage drinking is illegal. The legal drinking age in New Hampshire is 21 and over.

One “standard drink” = any one of the following:

- 5 fl oz glass of wine (a regular, 750 ml bottle of wine = 5 drinks)
- 12 fl oz regular beer (containing 5% alcohol) or one wine cooler
- 8-9 fl oz malt liquor, “ice beer,” or some microbrews (containing 7% alcohol)
- 1.5 fl oz 80-proof liquor (gin, rum, tequila, vodka, whiskey, etc. – a “fifth” or 750 ml = 17 drinks)
- $\frac{2}{3}$ of an 18-ounce plastic party cup of beer (a full cup = 1.5 beers)

Your liver can break down one drink per hour. Many light beers have almost as much alcohol as regular beer. Microbrews are potent and can have an alcohol content in excess of 10.0%.

BAC = Blood Alcohol Level

BAC is the ratio of alcohol to blood in the body, usually expressed as a percentage. A higher BAC is related to more negative, dangerous effects like blackouts, severe impairment, or even death.

In New Hampshire, it is illegal to drive with a BAC of .08% or above if you are over 21 years of age; it is illegal to drive with a BAC of .02% or above if you are under 21. If you are convicted of Driving While Intoxicated (DWI), you could lose your driver's license, have a charge on your criminal record, be required to pay more for insurance, and be mandated to attend substance abuse counseling sessions before restoration of driving privileges.



BAC is increased by the following:

- Female gender – women are more sensitive to alcohol than men are.
- Strength of the drink – hard alcohol is stronger than beer or wine.
- Drug interactions – mixing drugs (legal medications or illegal drugs) and alcohol can be dangerous.
- Body weight – smaller, less heavy people will be affected by alcohol more quickly.
- An empty stomach – lack of food before and during drinking will mean greater effects.



If you do choose to drink, here are some tips to help you do so safely:

1. Space out your drinks – no more than one drink per hour.
2. Alternate each alcoholic beverage with water.
3. Pour your own drinks so you know how much alcohol is in it.
4. Don't leave your drink unattended.
5. Don't accept a drink if you don't know what is in it.
6. Eat a full meal before you start drinking.
7. Avoid "pre-gaming" so that you do not drink too quickly.
8. Avoid speed drinking games and taking shots so that your BAC will not rise too fast.
9. Set a drink limit before you go out.
10. Count your drinks by using tallies, beer can tabs, or a phone app.
11. Stick to one type of alcohol – easier to keep track of the number of standard drinks.
12. Don't drink if you are upset – you may be less careful in these circumstances.
13. Go to the party with friends and stick together.
14. Plan how you will get home after the party.
15. Watch out for your friends; say something if you feel uncomfortable.



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