TOOLBOX TOPIC

EFFECTS OF ALCOHOL IN THE WORKPLACE

Apprentice Employment Network
SOUTH AUSTRALIA

GENERAL INFORMATION

The effects of alcohol can become a work health and safety issue if a person's ability to exercise judgment, coordination, motor control, concentration and alertness is affected at the workplace, leading to an increased risk of injury or illness to yourself or others.

Key stats and facts:

- It is estimated that alcohol contributes to 5% of workplace deaths.
- People that drink alcohol at work have more accidents.
- Alcohol is the largest drug use in Australia with 80% consuming it at least once in the last year.
- It is estimated that alcohol is involved with up to 65% of family violence incidents.
- It is estimated 22% or over 1 million Australian children are affected in some way by the drinking of parents/careers.
- Responsible drinking is about balancing enjoyment with potential risks and harm that may arise from drinking.

EFFECTS OF DRINKING ON YOUR BODY

Factors such as gender, age, mental health, drug use and existing medical conditions can change how alcohol affects you.

The long-term effect of heavy drinking virtually effects every part of the body. But because it happens gradually you probably don't notice. Liver damage, kidney failure and damage to the heart are common long term side effects and putting on the kilos.

The short-term effects include;

- Changes to your perceptions of speed and distance.
- Slows down your reaction time and reflexes.
- Reduction in muscle, hand, eye coordination, vision and hearing.
- Effects your sleep habits.
- Causes you to be sick and headaches.

EFFECTS OF DRINKING ON THE WORKPLACE

Drinking alcohol can impact safety and productivity at your work;

- Affect your ability to safely operate machinery or drive a car
- Make you over confident in your ability resulting in an injury or accident
- Hangover effects such as headaches, tiredness, shakiness, nausea and vomiting can also impact safety and productivity
- Drinking alcohol has also been linked to 'sickies' and that affects your workmates who have to do more work to cover the shift.

DATE:

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SUPERVISOR/ MANAGER:

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EMPLOYEE NAMES:

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FACT:

A man weighing 70kg would need to walk for 35 minutes or run for 15 minutes to burn off the 570 kilojoules contained in one stubby of beer.

NOTE

You may like to print out the reduce your risk brochure at **www.alcohol.gov.au**

ALCOHOL EDUCATION – WHAT IS A STANDARD DRINK

The guideline recommend that men and women should drink no more than two standard drinks on any day and no more than 4 in a single occasion.

QUESTIONS / ANSWERS TO GENERATE DISCUSSION

What is a standard drink? A standard drink is any drink containing 10 grams of alcohol. One standard drink always contains the same amount of alcohol regardless of container size or alcohol type, that is beer, wine, or spirit.

Key Facts: All alcohol bottles/cans need to be labeled with the amount of standard drinks per that serving size.

ALCOHOL EDUCATION – BLOOD ALCOHOL CONCENTRATION

Blood alcohol concentration (BAC) is a measure of alcohol in your body, expressed as grams of alcohol per 100mls of blood. For a BAC of 0.05, every 100mls of your blood contains 0.05 grams of alcohol. Your BAC can be measured through your breath, blood, and urine.

QUESTIONS / ANSWERS TO GENERATE DISCUSSION

How long does it take for a standard drink to leave your system?

As a rule of thumb, it takes an average healthy person about one hour to process one standard drink. But remember, this is a guideline only! Two people who drink the same amount of alcohol can have very different BACs.

What factors impact your BAC?

Gender
Due to differences in body composition, the same amount of alcohol will generally lead to a higher BAC in a woman than in a man.

Age
Younger people will reach a higher BAC faster than older people due to their faster metabolism.

Body size
A larger person has more blood to dilute the alcohol, and so will take longer to reach the same BAC as a smaller person. Also, muscle absorbs alcohol but fat does not, so the more body fat a person has, the faster their BAC will rise.

Liver function
Damaged or unhealthy livers cannot process alcohol as efficiently as healthy ones, resulting in higher BACs.

Stomach content
Food in your stomach slows absorption of alcohol, making your BAC rise slower than if you drank on an empty stomach.

Genetics
The liver enzymes used to break down alcohol differ from person to person, depending on genetic make-up. These enzymes work at different rates, meaning some people will naturally process alcohol faster than others.

WHERE TO GO FOR MORE HELP

Drug and Alcohol Services South Australia 1300 13 1340 (8:30am to 10:00pm every day). A confidential telephone counseling, information and referral service for the public, concerned family and friends, students and health professionals. Sources of Information **www.alcohol.gov.au www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au | www.safework.sa.gov.au**

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