

## The Truth About Alcohol and Sex

A recent commercial for a popular light beer, dubbed "Catfight," features a poolside argument that escalates into a clothes-shedding wrestling match between two buxom women. One version of the ad ends with the brunette saying to the blonde, "Let's make out."

It captures the common theme of American beer commercials—the association and the expectation that alcohol and sex go together like a hand in a glove. These ads especially appeal to the testosterone-induced fantasy that when attractive women come anywhere near a beer they become sexually aggressive and extremely interested in the guy holding the beer.

Are there any social ramifications to this theme? Do the relationships between men and women and alcohol *really* look like beer commercials?

### Alcohol and sex

Alcohol lowers inhibitions, impairs judgment and interferes with decision making to the point that you or another may behave in ways completely different from your normal behavior. It's hard to get to know someone when you aren't sure if it is the alcohol talking or the way the person actually acts. Alcohol abuse is directly related to unplanned and risky sexual behavior.

Here are some facts about alcohol abuse and sexual activity:

- Eighty percent of first sexual experiences occur under the influence of alcohol.
- Forty percent of men believe it is acceptable to force sex on a woman who is drunk.
- Almost 50 percent of unplanned sexual encounters occur when one or both persons are under the influence of alcohol.
- In two-thirds of unplanned pregnancies, the woman was intoxicated during sex.
- Sixty percent of sexually transmitted diseases are transmitted when the partners are drunk.

Having sex while under the influence of alcohol is not only risky—it can also be humiliating and produce intense feelings of guilt and shame. Here is an excerpt from an American Council on Drug Education report on alcohol and sex in which a young woman recounts a drunken sexual encounter:

*I was at a party at a friend's apartment right before Thanksgiving. I got pretty tanked playing drinking games, and suddenly I was outside on this fire escape with a guy I'd met an hour earlier. I was doing something to him I'd rather not talk about. The next morning I woke up and couldn't even remember his name. I felt disgusted. To make matters worse—either someone saw us, or he bragged to his friends about what happened—after I got back from the break, a friend of mine told me I had a new*

*nickname. I still haven't lived it down, and I feel like I'm this big joke."*

### Truth in advertising

There is no *direct* scientific evidence that says drinking alcohol results in sex. Alcohol advertising that promotes the use of alcohol and sexual activity may sell a lot of beer, but falls woefully short in telling the truth. Alcohol use increases the likelihood of unplanned and dangerous sexual liaisons with big lifetime consequences like parenthood, child support and diseases. Sadly, the negative, and often devastating, outcomes associated with alcohol use and sexual activity will never be shown in a beer commercial.

Sources:

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