

Alcohol poisoning

Someone with alcohol poisoning needs urgent medical attention

Alcohol poisoning is the result of drinking dangerous amounts of alcohol. It can be deadly; those who survive can be left with irreversible brain damage.

When someone consumes excessive amounts of alcohol, their breathing slows and the brain is deprived of oxygen. The struggle to deal with an overdose of alcohol and lack of oxygen will eventually cause the brain to shut down the body functions that regulate breathing and heart rate. When that happens, the drinker can die.

Rapid, excessive drinking is especially dangerous because people can consume a fatal amount of alcohol before they lose consciousness. It's best to always drink in moderation and to avoid taking part in drinking games that involve drinking excessive amounts or drinking rapidly.

Underage and inexperienced drinkers are particularly vulnerable to alcohol poisoning.

Alcohol poisoning is most commonly associated with drinking excessive amounts of alcohol in a short period of time.

What Can Happen?

People should never be left to 'sleep it off' – this could be a fatal mistake. A person's

Blood Alcohol Concentration may continue to rise even after they have passed out. If alcohol poisoning goes untreated, the following can happen:

- The victim can choke on his or her own vomit
- Breathing slows, becomes irregular and can stop
- The heart beats irregularly and can stop
- Body temperature decreases (i.e., hypothermia)
- Blood sugar can decrease (i.e., hypoglycaemia) which can cause seizures
- Permanent brain damage
- Death



A person with alcohol poisoning needs urgent medical attention. Here's what you should do:

- Don't panic
- Get medical help immediately – call the emergency services
- Turn them on their side (to prevent them inhaling or choking on vomit)
- Keep them warm

- Stay with them until medical help arrives

Don't try and sober the person up with black coffee or cold showers – these things don't work – and don't leave them to 'sleep it off'. They may never wake up.

Warning signs

Signs that someone might have alcohol poisoning include:

- Mental confusion
- Difficult to awaken
- Stupor, unconsciousness, coma
- Vomiting
- Seizures
- Slow or irregular breathing
- Blue-tinged skin, pale skin and/or cold clammy skin
- Low blood temperature

People can be suffering from alcohol poisoning without having all the sign and symptoms. If you suspect that someone has alcohol poisoning, get emergency medical help immediately.

talkingalcohol.com

is a site dedicated to helping people make informed choices about alcohol

other websites

These sites contain further information that you may find useful. However, SABMiller is not responsible for the content of these sites.

- Mayo Clinic – signs and symptoms of alcohol poisoning
www.mayoclinic.com/health/alcohol-poisoning/DS00861

- NIAAA, Facts About Alcohol Poisoning
www.collegedrinkprevention.gov/OtherAlcoholInformation/factsAboutAlcoholPoisoning.aspx
- Student Emergency Medical Services Foundation (SEMFS)
www.semsfoundation.org/index.php?s=7978