

news & notes

SHOULD YOU DRINK ALCOHOL?

Medical professionals recommend that people who have the following health conditions should avoid alcohol:

- A history of a hemorrhagic stroke
- Liver disease
- Pancreatic disease
- Evidence of precancerous changes in the esophagus, larynx, pharynx or mouth

Likewise people who are taking the following medications should avoid alcohol:

- Antibiotics
- Anticoagulants
- Antidepressants
- Aspirin
- Diabetes medications
- Antihistamines
- Anti-seizure medications
- Beta blockers
- Pain relievers
- Sleeping pills

If you are still unclear about your health and the effects of alcohol on your system, consult with your medical professional to assess your personal situation.



"Sir... is that eggnog I smell on your breath?"

EMPLOYEE SAFETY NEWSLETTER

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Drinking and Driving Don't Mix

Celebrate the holidays safely

'Tis the season to be jolly—and to stay away from your car if you've been too jolly. December is **National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month**. Recent statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA – www.nhtsa.gov) revealed that in the 12-hour period from 6:00 p.m. New Year's Eve to 6:00 a.m. New Year's Day **59 people died** in alcohol-related car crashes. That's nearly 5 people an hour!

Make sure you know **when you've had too much** to drink. For example, do you think you're okay to drive if you can speak without slurring your words and are not acting abnormally? Not so, according to the National Institute on Alcohol and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA – www.niaaa.nih.gov), which states that "the skills and coordination needed for driving are compromised long before the obvious signs of intoxication are visible."

Furthermore, drinking a cup of strong coffee will not sober you up enough to drive, because caffeine "doesn't counteract the effect of alcohol on decision-making or coordination. **The body needs time** to metabolize (break down) alcohol and even more time to return to normal."

The Truth about Alcohol

As for drinking alcohol even when you've designated a driver, how do you know if it is good or bad for your health? Certainly, you know that **excessive** alcohol consumption is bad for your health. In addition to possibly leading to addiction, drinking too much alcohol can cause various cancers, including mouth, liver, and breast, pancreatitis, heart muscle damage leading to heart failure, stroke, brain damage, cirrhosis of the liver, miscarriage, and fetal alcohol syndrome.

But what is too much? According to the Mayo Clinic (www.mayoclinic.com), too much is more than two drinks a day for men and one for women under the age of 65, and one drink a day for women and men over the age of 65. **One drink = 12 ounces of beer or 5 ounces of wine or 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits.**

So if you stick to the **moderate** drinking listed above, can alcohol be good for you? According to the Mayo Clinic, alcohol in moderation may reduce your risk for heart disease, strokes, gallstones, and diabetes.

In the end, it's up to you to decide whether to drink alcohol in moderation. See the sidebar story "Should **You** Drink Alcohol?" and consult with your medical professional to assess your situation.

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HANDWASHING WITHOUT SOAP

If you've read the article "Give Your Health a (Clean) Hand," you know how important frequent handwashing is to preventing the spread of colds and flus. But what do you do in situations where soap and water aren't available?

Use an alcohol gel or wipe to clean your hands. Rub the gel or wipe over the whole surface of your hand. But still remember to wash with soap and water as soon as it becomes available.

SLIPS STATS

Even though winter rolls around every year and you may be confident in your ability to avoid slips and falls, don't let yourself become complacent about the hazards. Keep these statistics in mind:

- Falls are among the most common type of injury both on and off the job.
- Several hundred thousand American workers suffer injuries from falls on the job every year—a number of these related to slipping accidents.
- Although slips and falls usually aren't fatal, they can cause serious damage, such as broken bones and back injuries.
- Awareness of hazards and safe actions can prevent most slip-related accidents



Give Your Health a (Clean) Hand

Don't give colds and flus to family and friends

Have you ever received a gift you didn't want? While some of us may have a few presents hidden away in back closets, all of us have undoubtedly received unwanted colds and flus from family, friends, and co-workers. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC - www.cdc.gov), 5 percent to 20 percent of the U.S. population gets the flu every year, more than 200,000 people are hospitalized, and 36,000 people die.

But there's an easy way to prevent getting—and giving—these illnesses: Washing your hands frequently. Celebrate **National Hand Washing Awareness Week**, which is the first full week in December, by following the CDC's recommendations for when to wash your hands:

- **Before and after eating**
- **After** going to the **bathroom**
- **After** changing **diapers** or helping a young child in the bathroom
- **After** coming in contact with vomit or other **body fluids**
- **After coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose**
- **Before and after** treating an **injury**
- **After** touching **animals** or animal waste
- **More often** when someone around you is sick

To wash your hands effectively, use **warm water and soap**, lather the **whole surface** of your hands, and **rub for 20 seconds** before rinsing and drying thoroughly.

Slipping and Sliding are for the Slopes

Prevent slips and falls in winter conditions

Unless you're ice skating or skiing, you don't want to be slipping and sliding—especially around your workplace. Weather-related slips and falls become a serious hazard as winter conditions create wet or icy surfaces. Even wet leaves and mud can create treacherous walking conditions. And wet and muddy shoes can track inside the building to create slippery surfaces inside as well.

Take these steps to prevent slips and falls for yourself and co-workers:

- Wear sensible shoes with nonskid soles in winter weather.
- Use mats or rugs in entryways to wipe snow and ice off your shoes as much as possible so you do not track wet spots inside your building.
- Know who to report slippery conditions at your workplace and how to contact those people.
- Clean up or report slippery spots in entryways, walkways, parking lots, or other areas immediately so maintenance can take care of the areas and/or post signs to warn people of slippery conditions.
- When you have to walk in treacherous conditions, take small steps and shuffle your feet.