

Signs to Watch for

Keep your drinking in the normal range. Watch for these signs of unhealthy drinking:

- Do you frequently vomit after drinking?
- Have you had trouble remembering things that happened while you were drinking?
- Have you ever passed out while drinking?
- Is drinking interfering with your grades or your job?
- Do you spend a lot of money on alcohol?
- Are you drinking more to get the same effect?
- Have you ever had withdrawal (felt sick when you weren't drinking, and felt better once you had a drink?)
- Have you injured yourself while drinking?
- Are you drinking to get drunk?

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WhatsNormalWhatsNot

Indiana University of
Pennsylvania

Alcohol: What's Normal, What's Not



Brought to you by:
Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs Program
Center for Health and Well-Being

It's Normal not to Drink or to Drink Moderately

Contrary to popular belief, not all college students drink. Many college students have never consumed alcohol.

- 70.8 percent of IUP students report they drink once a week or less.
- 20.8 percent of IUP students report they never drink alcohol.
- 65 percent of IUP students report when they do drink they drink four drinks or less.

*Percentages based on 2009 CORE survey data



When you drink, it's normal to know your limits and take steps to stay with them.

- **Make a plan and set a limit**—It's tough to know when to stop when your judgment is impaired. Make decisions about drinking before you start
- **Eat before you drink** and while your drinking. Food slows down alcohol absorption
- **Space and pace** your drinks
- **Avoid drinking games**
- **Keep track** of how much you've had
- **Remember** 1 drink = 12 oz. beer, 4 oz. wine, 1 oz. liquor

Tolerance is a Warning Sign

Tolerance means that over time you have to drink more to get the same effect. A person with tolerance may not show the same effects from alcohol as someone with no tolerance, but their BAC is just the same. People with tolerance may not realize how impaired they actually are. Tolerance is a warning sign that a person is becoming dependent on alcohol.

Blackouts Aren't Normal

A blackout is when a person is fully functioning but does not remember all or parts of the time when they were drinking. This is different from "passing out" which involves a loss of consciousness.

Blackouts are most likely caused by rapid increase in BAC and/or extreme intoxication. Everyone is different so when a person may experience a blackout will vary.

Blackouts put a person at greater risk of alcohol-related injuries or death. Only 36 percent of IUP students have ever experienced memory loss from drinking. That means most students have not and will not experience a blackout related to alcohol.

Your Body Knows What's Normal—and What's Not

The following are signs that warn your body when you have consumed too much alcohol. Some of these are protective mechanisms your body uses to protect you from dangerous consequences of drinking.



- Vomiting, blacking out and passing out are all clear signs you've had too much to drink
- A hangover is the body's reaction when a toxic substance shocks the system. Signs include a dry "cotton mouth," fatigue, upset stomach, headache, and sore muscles
- Alcohol-related injuries (falls, motor vehicle wrecks, etc.) are some of the negative consequences of drinking too much
- The depressant effects of high levels of alcohol can simply "shut off" the nervous system. Breathing will stop and the person can die