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Alcohol's Effects on the Body

Drinking too much – on a single occasion or over time – can take a serious toll on your health. Here's how alcohol can affect your body:

Brain:

Alcohol interferes with the brain's communication pathways, and can affect the way the brain looks and works. These disruptions can change mood and behavior, and make it harder to think clearly and move with coordination.

Heart:

Drinking a lot over a long time or too much on a single occasion can damage the heart, causing problems including:

- Cardiomyopathy – Stretching and drooping of heart muscle
- Arrhythmias – Irregular heart beat
- Stroke
- High blood pressure

Research also shows that drinking [moderate amounts of alcohol](#) may protect healthy adults from developing coronary heart disease.

Liver:

Heavy drinking takes a toll on the liver, and can lead to a variety of problems and liver inflammations including:

- Steatosis, or fatty liver
- Alcoholic hepatitis
- Fibrosis
- Cirrhosis

Pancreas:

Alcohol causes the pancreas to produce toxic substances that can eventually lead to pancreatitis, a dangerous inflammation and swelling of the blood vessels in the pancreas that prevents proper digestion.

Cancer:

Drinking too much alcohol can increase your risk of developing certain cancers, including cancers of the:

- Mouth
- Esophagus
- Throat
- Liver
- Breast

Immune System:

Drinking too much can weaken your immune system, making your body a much easier target for disease. Chronic drinkers are more liable to contract diseases like pneumonia and tuberculosis than people who do not drink too much. Drinking a lot on a single occasion slows your body's ability to ward off infections – even up to 24 hours after getting drunk.

Learn more about [alcohol's effects on the body](#).

<http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/alcohol-health/alphols-effects-body>