

Should We Do It?

If you and your partner have been drinking and you're not sure if they are too drunk to engage in sexual activity, think through these couple of suggestions before you engage in sexual behavior. It is always a best practice to avoid engaging in sexual activity while drinking or drunk.

Think about the following questions:

- ▷ Has your partner had too much to drink?
- ▷ Can your partner communicate effectively?
- ▷ Did you agree on engaging in any sexual activity before drinking? Note: This is helpful but never final. Is your partner sober enough to give enthusiastic, informed consent?
- ▷ Have you been drinking? Can you make a sound, informed decision about engaging in sexual behavior?
- ▷ Is the consent clear? If not, stop what you are doing immediately.

Please know that if someone chooses to drink, that choice does not mean they are asking to be assaulted. No one should ever hurt or take advantage of another person's vulnerability or impairment.

Whether alcohols is involved or not, the assault is ALWAYS the fault of the offender, regardless of whether or not he/she had been drinking.



STOP Violence Program

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Sex Under the Influence



UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

Alcohol and Sex

When you add alcohol to a sexual situation, the line between right and wrong can seem blurred. Alcohol lowers your inhibitions and makes think and do things that you wouldn't normally do. This increases your sexual risk in two ways - you will either become more coercive in trying to get someone to have sex with you or you will increase your risk of being sexually victimized. Neither is a good option.

The Blame Game

Sometimes people blame alcohol for their unacceptable behavior by saying, "Oh, it's no big deal. I was drunk" or "It wasn't my fault. I was drunk. I didn't know what I was doing." However, it is important to remember that, even if you under the influence of alcohol, you will be held accountable for your actions. For example, if you drive while drunk, you are not going to be excused a heavy fine and other punishments because you were drunk and didn't know better. Same thing with sexual assault - if you assault someone under the influence, you are still responsible for that action.

On the other hand, it is NEVER the victim's fault if they are assaulted, regardless of whether he/she was drunk. No one deserves to be raped. Choosing to drink alcohol should not be equated with choosing to be sexually assaulted.

State law and university policy mandate that a person you is unconscious or incapacitated (whether through drugs, alcohol, or illness) cannot give consent to sex. Therefore, if sexual contact occurs, it is sexual assault. If you are uncertain about your partner's ability to give consent, it is best to wait for another time. For more information about the effect of alcohol on campus, check out the AWARE site.

Coercion

Something that really comes into play with sexual assault, especially when alcohol is involved, is coercion. Coercion is using force, through threats, pressure, begging, blackmail, or incapacitation (alcohol/drugs), in order to get someone to do something. Coercion can range from being subtle to obvious.

Methods of coercion include but are not limited to:

- ▷ Encouraging someone to disregard personal boundaries
- ▷ Encouraging someone to drink alcohol
- ▷ Actively pressuring someone to engage in a sexual behavior
- ▷ Using guilt or pressure to get someone to engage in a sexual behavior
- ▷ Threatening to harm someone if they do not do what you want
- ▷ Using physical force to get what you want
- ▷ Using emotional pressure to get what you want
- ▷ Using social/peer pressure or your social standing to get someone to do what you want



Did you know that 90% of sexual assaults on campus are a result of either the victim or the assailant using alcohol?+

+ Additional information at Facts on Tap

You are being coerced if:

- ▷ You feel like you have no choice
- ▷ You face potential social consequences if you don't do what is asked
- ▷ You are relentless pressured
- ▷ You feel threatened or afraid of what might happen if you resist
- ▷ A person abuses authority and rank to get you to comply
- ▷ A person continues pressure after you have said "no"

Protect Yourself

There are a lot of ways for you to protect yourself from alcohol-facilitated sexual assault, coercion, or date rape drugs. Follow these few simple strategies and make sure that you are taking care of your safety.

Don't Drink. If you don't drink, you significantly decrease the probability that you will assault someone or be assaulted.

Eat before and during drinking. Having food in your stomach will help to absorb the alcohol, meaning your BAC increases more slowly. If alcohol hits you all at once, the effects can be much more dangerous (like blackouts).

Use the buddy system. If you're going out to drink, go with a group of trusted friends to watch over each other and make sure that no one does something they don't want to do. Also, if a friend appears too drunk or woozy (maybe because of a date rape drug), then the group can take the friend home or get medical attention.

Avoid playing drinking games. Drinking games encourage you to drink a lot of alcohol in a short amount of time. It is easy to lose track of how much you've had and may lead to a blackout.

Always have an exit plan. Knowing how to get home safely is crucial to keeping yourself safe. Some suggestions are: keep the number of a cab company in your cell phone, use a designate driver, have friends who will intervene, or set up a signal with a friend to let them know you need a rescue.

Never leave your drink unattended, avoid open containers (punch bowls, etc), and do not accept a drink from someone you don't know. Predatory drugs are out there and they can be used to facilitate a sexual assault. You need to be careful of these drugs. **It is important to know that alcohol is still the most common predatory drug.**