

My best friend died. I don't want you to.





Shar and I, we did everything together.

Same grade, same classes. She lived right downstairs. We would talk and talk. We had our secrets and we tried new stuff together. So when we tried alcohol, we figured we would take it easy, no harm, right? I mean, I liked it, but Shar really liked it, she even used to joke about passing out. It never occurred to me...you know...

You don't have to believe me. I'm not into preaching. But just listen — then make up your own mind. You want numbers? They're on page 6. But this isn't about numbers. It's about Shar. And you. And your friends.

It's none of my business if you drink. I'm not your parents. I'm not the cops. I can't stop you. But if you're going to drink, you need to know a few things.

Know what you're drinking. "It's only beer." Or maybe "it's only wine." Have you ever said that? I did. Shar did. If you go through a six-pack, it's the same as knocking back nine ounces of the hard stuff. That's a third of a bottle. If that's not what you were planning, think about it.

Oh, yeah, driving. After three or four drinks in one hour — or three beers — you're going to be DUI. Your blood alcohol level will probably be over .08 percent — that's the limit in Illinois.

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Drink more and it goes up. Maybe it takes more if you're a 200-pound guy. But if you're a woman, it takes less. It's not fair. It's chemistry.

Shar weighed 115.

She told me she could handle it.

And I believed her. But when you drink too much, you can't trust your

judgment. You think you've got all your moves, but you don't. Alcohol is an anesthetic — it slows down your brain and your reflexes, even if you don't think so. Go too far and you'll lose coordination, your vision might blur, and you could experience a blackout (meaning you don't remember what you did while you were drunk).

.35 percent. Doesn't sound like much, does it? That was Shar's blood alcohol level. We were all partying pretty hard, having a good time. Looking back, I guess she had a

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dozen or so drinks. She was staggering a little, and laughing. Later, when I

hadn't seen her for a while, I found her passed out in a corner.

Drinking Over Time

When You're a Teen:

If you drink before you're 14, you're three times more likely to develop alcohol dependency than if you wait until you're 21. (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services statistics)

If You're Pregnant:

You run the risk of having a baby with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome — a baby with a small head, possible brain damage, abnormal facial features, and poor muscle tone.

Here's what I found out. After six to 10 drinks, some people can't see straight, walk straight or talk straight. That's somewhere between .12 and .20. At a dozen drinks, you're at

about .25; this is where some people pass out. And don't forget — even after you stop drinking, your body is still pumping the last few drinks into your bloodstream. So your

blood alcohol level won't stop rising for a while.

Over .30, you're a candidate for a coma. At that point, you're not sleeping it off. And if there's no one

As an Adult:

Even if you wait until you're 21, there's still a 10 percent chance that you'll have a lifetime alcohol dependence problem.

Many Years Down the Road:

Maybe you can handle it now. But you'll pay for it later. A lifetime of heavy drinking can trash your health and appearance. And when you're older, it takes less alcohol to overdose.



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around who knows what to do, you're in trouble.

I didn't know what to do. Neither did anyone else. Now I do. And even if it's too late for Shar, it's not too late for you and your friends.

Learn to recognize the signs of alcohol poisoning. Know when someone's in trouble. Know how to help.

Drinking is a decision. Knowing how to deal with the consequences of that decision could save someone's life.

Find out more at www.DontBeSorry.org

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By the Numbers

Yeah, it can happen to you. Here are the statistics...don't become one.

- Last year, 1,400 college students were killed in alcohol-related accidents.
- 500,000 college students were injured, and there were 70,000

cases reported of sexual assault or date rape.

- Within the past 12 months, 31 percent of college students between the ages of 18 and 24 met the criteria for a diagnosis of alcohol abuse and 6 percent for alcohol dependency.

- 400,000 students reported having had unprotected sex as a result of drinking.

(Statistics: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' National Institutes of Health)

Knowing what to do if someone drinks too much could save a life.

Passing out IS NOT THE SAME as “sleeping it off!”

If someone passes out, you need to act — NOW! No matter what you may have heard, passing out is not normal. People who have overdosed on alcohol can't help themselves, so it's up to you to get help. Your friend's life may depend on it.

How to tell if someone has Alcohol Poisoning

1. Unconsciousness or semi-consciousness;
2. Slow breathing — 8 breaths or less a minute or breathing that stops for more than 8 seconds at a time;
3. Cold, clammy, pale or bluish skin;
4. Does not respond to being talked to or even shouted at;
5. Does not respond to being pinched, prodded or poked;
6. Cannot stand up;
7. Rapid pulse rate.

What to do if you think someone has Alcohol Poisoning

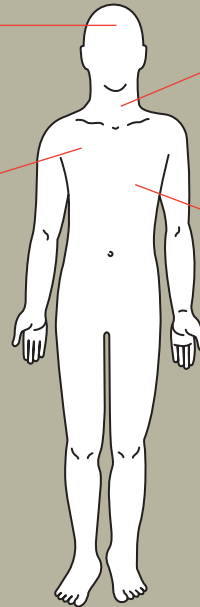
1. Call 911 immediately...this is a medical emergency!
2. Turn the person over onto their side so that if vomiting occurs, it won't get into the airway.
3. Stay with the person until medical help arrives.
4. Don't waste time with non-medical treatments. It's a myth that cold showers, black coffee or oxygen do any good at all.
5. A life could be at stake. That's a lot more important than the possible legal consequences of underage drinking.
6. Don't try to second-guess, because while you're waiting, your friend could be dying.
7. Remember, being a good friend means being aware and taking action. When it comes to saving someone's life, it's better to be safe than sorry.

Remember...you may be the only person there who knows how to save your friend's life!

How Alcohol Affects Your Body

Brain: Alcohol destroys brain cells. Drink regularly for a long time and you'll probably wind up with serious cognitive, memory and mood problems.

Lungs: Heavy drinkers have more lung infections and can be more susceptible to pneumonia and lung collapse. When you're drunk, you lose your reflexes, so you can't clear your airway when you vomit. That means your stomach contents may get sucked into your lungs, which can lead to choking or pneumonia, even death.

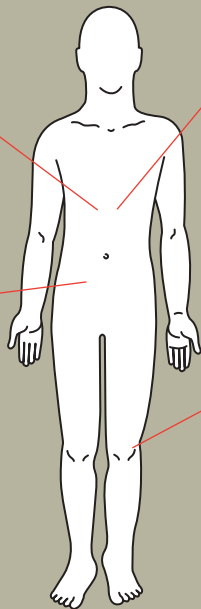


Esophagus: Alcoholics have high rates of cancer of the esophagus, mouth, and larynx. Heavy drinking also leads to erosion of the esophagus.

Heart: Heavy regular drinking can cause high blood pressure, damage to the heart muscle and heart failure. Cardiovascular disease is already the leading cause of death; why increase the risk?

Liver: Chronic drinking is the leading cause of cirrhosis of the liver, a condition that can choke off blood flow to the liver and destroy it. Right now, a transplant is the only cure for liver failure.

Kidneys: Alcohol increases urine output and dehydration, which put a heavy strain on your kidneys. Prolonged heavy drinking can cause kidney damage.



Stomach: Alcohol irritates the stomach, and can cause gastritis, ulcers and acid reflux. Gastritis is an inflammation of the mucous membrane that lines the stomach. Erosion in that lining can cause constant loss of blood into the stomach or, if a vessel ruptures, major bleeding.

Joints & Muscles: Alcohol dependence can cause osteoporosis and arthritis, and deform the joints. It can shrink muscles and lead to severe muscle pain and weakness.

Binge Drinking: Bingeing regularly affects the whole body and is an instant ticket to aging. You could wind up with problems you shouldn't have to think about for another 40 years, including liver disease (cirrhosis, hepatitis, etc.), cardiovascular disease (enlarged heart, high blood pressure, anemia), strokes, higher rate of infections, muscle decay, stomach and intestinal problems, higher rates of cancer, weakened bones resulting in more fractures and more.



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